

THE HOHENSTEINS

A Novel

BY

FRIEDRICH SPIELHAGEN

Author's Edition.



NEW YORK
LEYPOLDT & HOLT

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FROM THE GERMAN

BY

PROF. SCHELE DE VERE

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III.—THE HOHENSTEINS.

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IV.—HAMMER AND ANVIL. (IN MAY.)

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V.—IN RANK AND FILE.

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CRITICAL NOTICES.

"Such a novel as no English author with whom we are acquainted could have written, and no American author except Hawthorne. What separates it from the multitude of American and English novels is the perfection of its plot, and its author's insight into the souls of his characters. . . .

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"The work is one of immense vigor; the characters are extraordinary, yet not unnatural; the plot is the sequence of an admirably-sustained web of incident and action. The portrayments of characteristic foibles and peculiarities remind one much of the masterhand of the great Thackeray. The author Spielhagen in Germany ranks very much as Thackeray does with us, and many of his English reviewers place him at the head and front of German novelists."—*Troy Daily Times*.

"His characters have, perhaps, more passion, and act their parts with as much dramatic effect as those which have passed under the hand of Auerbach."—*Chicannati Chronicle*.

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THE HOUSE OF HOHENSTEIN.

PART FIRST.

CHAPTER I.

IT was one of those lovely fair spring days in which the year eighteen hundred and forty-eight was so rich, the sun looked joyously from the blue, cloudless sky, upon the wide, fertile plain through which the great stream winds its majestic course. The larks were jubilant over the meadows and wheat-fields which cover the gentle slopes from the river up to Castle Rheinfeld. In the large neglected park of the château the nightingales were singing in green hedges and shrubs, and cawing crows were busy building their nests upon the gigantic trees which raised their bare arms here and there above the woods high into the heavens.

In one of the avenues that led to the château, the Baroness Clotilda Hohenstein, the president's wife, was walking with her two daughters, Aurelia and Camilla. The ladies had arrived an hour ago in their own carriage, because the president, who lived in Cologne, wished that his wife and her daughters should be the first of the whole family to offer his excellency, the old general, their congratulations on his birthday, and to present to him the finest boquets that his gardener's skill had been able to form. But alas! the beautiful boquets were still waiting to be accepted! There they were lying on the stone table in the garden-house, and the tender flowers began already to look as mournful as the ladies themselves. But it was really too bad. They had probably walked up and down the avenue fifty times now, looking steadily across the little lake that formed a pretty foreground to the château, at the windows of the general's bed-room. At first this side of the house had been in shadow; they had seen the shadow disappear gradually, till now the whole front was in bright sunlight, and the blue curtains had

not yet been drawn ! Heretofore, when the ladies had come out for similar purposes towards noon, the general had, in his coarse, sneering manner, spoken of "late risers, who could not leave their beds even for the sake of an old man ;" and now, when they thought they would please him by an early call, he kept them waiting for hours ! No one had been there to receive them on their arrival ! Even "madame" had been invisible. After waiting in their carriage for a quarter of an hour before the main entrance, Kilian, a rough old servant, had at last come out to tell them that his excellency was still asleep, and madame likewise—did they wish to have the horses put up ? The president's wife had never enjoyed a very cordial reception at Rheinfeld, but this was worse than ever.

The ladies had finished their fifty-first round, and as they were turning back the sunlight came into the shaded walk, presenting their figures in the most favorable light.

The Baroness Hohenstein was a very stately lady of some forty odd years. Her husband's friends, privy councillors, and other men, who had known her as Miss Slick in Berlin, before she married Baron Hohenstein, then in an inferior position, still thought with delight of her delicate beauty, and remembered how wonderfully well Miss Clotilda had danced, at the same time charming all her partners by her sprightliness and wit. It is true, that was twenty years ago, and twenty years produce great changes even in the most light-footed, lissome figure and the most exuberant spirits. Clotilda had become corpulent and sentimental ; her features, never remarkable for regularity, had grown large in consequence of indolence and good living. Only her dark hair was still beautiful and glossy ; and her brown, sensuous eyes reminded former admirers of the Clotilda of other days, the renowned queen of all the balls at the capital.

The same authorities considered the older daughter, though smaller than her mother, most like her ; and certainly, if the quintessence of the mother's whole manner was sensuousness, this characteristic feature was very strongly imprinted upon the appearance of Aurelia. She was about nineteen years old. And already her eyes, moderately large, but dark and brilliant, were eminently sensuous ; sensuous were the full, cherry-red lips, sensuous the full outlines

of neck and bust, shining like marble in the bright sunlight, as the young lady happened for a moment to let the black mantilla drop down on her skirt. Still, Aurelia could at best be called pretty only ; but her sister, younger by two years, was beyond question a regular beauty. Nearly half a head taller than Aurelia, and by so much smaller than her stately mother, Camilla showed in her lithe figure the most perfect symmetry, and in her form that budding grace which is to womanly fulness what the bud is to the flower. The features of her sweet oval face, also, were of uncommon delicacy, aided by a soft complexion, which perhaps lacked brilliancy. Connoisseurs in such matters dwelt specially upon the pleasing contrast between the lighter color of her soft, glossy hair with the darker brows, finely arched, and the long silken lashes that drooped so charmingly over the dark eyes, swimming in their soft splendor. "Upon my word, if an angel had been sent from heaven upon this dark earth of ours, he would have asked as a favor the privilege of assuming this form," the painter Kettenberg had quite recently exclaimed, after having "arranged" Miss Camilla as Mignon in one of the tableaux given at the president's house.

"I am tired, children," said the mother, sitting down on the bench near the half-fallen table, and looking sadly at the fading flowers. "Are not you?"

"Well, I can stand it," said Aurelia, pausing and drawing up her mantilla, "I only think it is an awful bore."

Suddenly she commenced laughing, and said: "Oh, Camilla, what a face you are making! If Baron Willamowsky were to see you so, he would wail over one more *illusion perdue*."

Camilla had taken a seat on the other end of the bench. Her beautiful face had certainly an expression in most decided contrast with her soft features.

"Let me alone," said the young lady, impatiently.

"Good Heavens! who is hurting you?" replied the sister.

"Can I help it if miss has not slept enough to-day? I told you over and over again, last night, not to dance all the time."

"You thought that might benefit you," sneered Camilla.

"Oh, angel! I have never yet been without partners,

although I have not yet driven a great painter to despair, nor done any other harm by my beauty."

"Why must you always be quarrelling, children?" said the mother, pulling off her gloves and admiring her fat, white hands. "I should think you were badly enough off as it is."

"We are not so very badly off, mamma," said the young lady, balancing herself on her high heels, "if we only had something to eat. I begin to be awfully hungry."

"That is the second time in five minutes that you have said 'awful,'" remarked Camilla.

"You use much worse words," replied the sister.

"But, children," said the mother beseechingly, and throwing the gloves she had carefully rolled up on the table.

There followed a pause in the conversation of the ladies, during which Aurelia amused herself by sending flat stones across the pond. Suddenly she turned around and said:

"But, mamma, please tell me why are we so awf—I had nearly said 'awful' again, Camilla—so desperately attentive to our granduncle?"

"What do you call 'desperately attentive?'" asked mamma.

"I call it being desperately attentive, if we overwhelm with our attentions a man who is superhumanly rude and rough to us; if we are all the time making embroideries for him, which he never makes use of; if we write letters which he does not answer; and pay him visits of congratulations, during which he treats us *comme à présent, en canaille*."

"I should think that subject had been discussed often enough," said Camilla, looking carelessly at the point of her small foot.

"Then propose a better one if you can," cried Aurelia.

"Camilla is right," said the mother; "the thing has been discussed often enough, setting aside that we owe some consideration to the general as the head of the family. It is one of the first rules of ordinary wisdom to try to win the favor of a man on whom we are, so to speak, dependent."

"But, mamma, have not you quite a large fortune of your own?"

"Well, I have, or rather I had. You see, child, we spend a great deal; living is enormously expensive. Your father's

ridiculously small salary, and the interest on my property, do not go half-way; we have to spend the principal. Sooner or later there will be an end of it; and if—as may happen any day—you marry, where is the trousseau to come from? It makes me shudder to think of it.”

The mother put her arm around Camilla and drew her to herself, as if she wished to protect her child against a fate which, to her eyes, certainly appeared terrible.

“But I thought,” Aurelia began once more, “we were at any rate to inherit granduncle’s property. Why, then, take all this awf—this horrible trouble?”

“How you talk!” said Camilla, still leaning on her mother’s bosom; “as if you did not know that Uncle Gisbert is quite as near to him as we are.”

“Well, then, leave him alone! A few thousand dollars more or less do not matter much.”

The mother sighed. She thought of several old bills, of which her husband had no suspicion, and how enormous the difference between a few thousand dollars more or less is for a maternal heart, beating affectionately for her daughter’s wardrobe! Camilla undertook to rebuke Aurelia for her thoughtless remark.

“You will make mamma lose the rest of her patience by your foolish talk,” she said. “Perhaps you will do like Aunt Antonia, and proclaim at our next party that you do not care a sixpence for your granduncle.”

“I only wish I were as independent as Aunt Antonia, and could do it!”

“But your Aunt Antonia is a widow and rich, and you are neither, and that is why you cannot do it,” said the mother, almost angrily. “Dear child,” she continued in a softer tone, “do you really think your papa and I would take the matter so seriously if we did not know how important it is to win your granduncle’s favor. He may die any day, so the doctor told me only last night, and your father thinks it highly probable that he has not made his will yet. But if he should die intestate, which God forbid, then your father and his two brothers inherit equally.”

“That would suit Uncle Arthur exactly,” said Aurelia, laughing.

“But it would not suit us,” replied the mother. “Uncle

Arthur has forfeited the general's favor forever by his marriage with that woman—what is her name?—and by his democratic tendencies. If therefore your granduncle should make his will, he is most likely to exclude the alderman altogether. Uncle Ernest is dead and has left no children—I suppose I may say God be thanked!—so that your Aunt Antonia, being childless and rich in her own right, has no claim upon the inheritance, and thus there remain only your papa and Uncle Gisbert. Now, the colonel stands in bad repute with your granduncle, and——”

“But so does papa, doesn't he?” interrupted Aurelia.

“Unfortunately he does!” sighed the mother; “all the more needful for you to take every possible pains to get into his favor. Capricious and eccentric as he is, I should not wonder at all if he left everything to you two.”

“Wouldn't that be famous!” exclaimed Aurelia, clapping her hands; “wouldn't we live then! The first thing would be to put the park in order again; it looks like a primeval forest now. And then the old box of a château must be painted afresh. And then a house full of guests every day, and at night colored Chinese lamps all around the lake here, and little gondolas and *bal champêtre*! *Grands dieux*! How angry Aunt Selma would be! and Cousin Cuno and that divine Odo! Did I tell you, Camilla, what a brilliant compliment Cuno paid me last night at the cotillon?”

“Well!” asked Camilla, raising her lustrous eyes, full of curiosity.

“‘Upon honor, cousin!’” and the young girl drew her heels together and twisted an imaginary little moustache on her upper lip; “‘upon honor, cousin, I am in a cruel quandary. When I dance with Camilla, I think I must marry her; and when I dance with you, it seems to me a duty to jilt your sister.’”

“Foolish fop!” said Camilla, disfiguring her beautiful mouth by a sneer.

“Dear children,” said the mother, “you ought to try and put yourselves in such a position that you can choose among your beaux, like your Aunt Antonia. It is in your power. Do what you can to keep your granduncle in good humor. But this way of treating us is really too bad. Even ‘madame’ does not show herself. Let us go back to the house

and see if we cannot at least get something to eat. I am nearly faint with hunger."

"Come, dear mamma!" said Aurelia, offering her mother her arm.

"Camilla, you can take the flowers!—to be sure we might just as well throw them into the lake."

The ladies had taken a few steps, when they saw one of the blue curtains, on which they still fixed their longing looks, slowly rise. Behind the window-panes appeared a gigantic figure with a white night-cap on the head, and the upper part of the body wrapped in a white flannel jacket. The lower part was hid below the window.

"Our uncle—our granduncle!" exclaimed mother and daughters in one breath.

The white figure half opened the window and leaned out.

"Good morning, uncle!—good morning, dearest granduncle!" cried the ladies.

The distance between them and the house might be about a hundred yards; only a piece of the garden and the lake lay between. It seemed impossible that the general should not see them. Nevertheless it looked as if he did not. He turned his head to the right; he turned his head to the left; he leaned out still further and looked into the gooseberry bushes under the window.

"Here! here!" cried the ladies, waving their handkerchiefs.

The general rose to his full length, held his wrinkled hand over his bushy eyebrows, and looked carefully up at the sky. After discovering nobody up there who could possibly have called to him, he seemed to give the thing up in despair. He shook his night-cap and carefully closed the window.

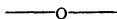
"Here! here!" cried the ladies, but with doleful voices. The next moment the blue curtain was down again.

"He did not see us," the mother cried, almost in tears.

"Oh, he did not want to see us!" said Aurelia. "Don't mind it, darling mamma, we will do all we can to please granduncle. It is really too grand a thought to be able to give a ball here!"

Merry Aurelia seized her mother around her waist, and drew her, laughing, towards the château. Camilla followed

slowly. With her finely arched brows contracted, and the silken lashes hanging low over her melancholy eyes, she reflected how she could manage, in what way she could contrive that her granduncle should leave all his property to her, Camilla Hohenstein, to the exclusion of all the other members of the family.



CHAPTER II.

WHEN the ladies came into the court-yard, through a dilapidated, ivy-covered portal, they did not see their own carriage, which had been put under cover, but a couple of saddle-horses, led by a groom, and an open barouche, from which the horses had just been taken. This sight put the ladies, if possible, into still worse humor. For while they had been wasting their time in the garden, the colonel's family had arrived, had been announced, and was probably now with the general.

"But I shall tell granduncle that we have been here these two hours," cried the old lady, roused by so many mishaps from her usual phlegmatic repose and going hurriedly towards the château.

When they reached the broad open entrance, however, the ladies found that they had been needlessly excited. In the large hall, with its tessellated floor and its galleries above, they found the other Baroness Hohenstein, the colonel's wife, and her two sons, Lieutenant Cuno and Ensign Odo, evidently in very bad humor and almost frightened at the sight of their relatives.

"What, you here, dearest Clotilda!" said the new-comer, quickly recovering herself and meeting her sister-in-law with open arms.

"As you see, dearest Selma!" was the reply, followed by a very slight embrace.

"Oh, how charming! When did you come?—and the girls too! How fresh you look—like roses! Not a trace of last night. Young gentlemen, you ought to follow your cousin's example."

It certainly looked as if the two young men ought to have followed somebody's example instead of their own. If their sallow complexions, their watery eyes, and their general lassitude were only "traces of last night," they were at all events very marked traces. The ensign, especially, looked fearfully worsted. His face, with the tender down just appearing, had an expression of old age about it, such as is frequently found in infants and apes. The lieutenant was somewhat better preserved, the result of a stronger constitution, rather than of superior principles. Both of the young men were tall, blond, and rather handsome, and in all of these qualities the images of their mother.

The two elderly ladies met each other very cautiously, in spite of their apparent cordiality, and somewhat like two gamblers who have recognized each other after the first deal, and yet are forced to play the game out in order to avoid a scene. The colonel's wife played her part best. She was so sorry she had not thought of it last night, or they might have come out together. The colonel was to join them by the steamer, at two o'clock. Was the president also coming up? How very charming that was! Dear old uncle is no doubt in bed yet. We have been standing here for a quarter of an hour, and Kilian—is not Kilian his name?—whom we have sent in with our names, has not come back yet. Madame also is nowhere to be seen. Have you seen the old creature? No? why, children, then you are even worse off than we are. But why did you start so early? and the poor flowers, all faded! But why did you get such expensive flowers? You have spent a little fortune, I declare. Look at mine! They keep better and do not cost half as much."

"We are not all of us such good managers as you are, Aunt Selma," remarked Aurelia, wishing to come to her mother's assistance.

"That is because we have not a large fortune to spend," replied her aunt, alluding to their well-known extravagance.

It is not improbable that in the momentarily excited state of mind of both parties, the discussion might have degenerated into an exchange of sharp and insulting speeches—such things had happened before—if Mrs. Bridget had not appeared at that moment on the gallery above, an immense mob-cap on her head and a large bunch of keys in her belt.

After inspecting the company from her vantage ground for a while and quietly enjoying their miserable plight, she came down the stone staircase so slowly that the exalted and noble assembly below had ample time to prepare themselves for the disgraceful part they had to play. The colonel's wife was the first to undergo her punishment. She hastened to meet "madame;" seized her, as soon as she came down the last step, by both hands, and said: "Dear, good madame! how are you! How very well you look! I declare you look younger every year."

"That is more than can be said of most people," replied Dame Bridget, dryly.

But the diplomatic lady was not so easily overcome. "And how is his excellency, our dear uncle? Not up yet, they tell me! You must let him sleep on, the dear old gentleman. Better that we should wait an hour longer than that he should lose his rest."

"His excellency has had a very bad night and cannot rise before four o'clock this afternoon," said Bridget, having received the homage of the president's wife and daughters with the same offensive condescensions.

"The young gentlemen will prefer taking a walk in the garden, I dare say, while I show the ladies to their rooms. Breakfast will be on the table in an hour."

Aurelia and her mother exchanged woe-begone glances at these words, but none of the ladies dared say a word against the decrees of the all-powerful housekeeper. Silently they followed her up the broad staircase, and passively submitted to being shown into the meanest and most uncomfortable rooms that could be found in the whole house.

The young men went into the park as madame had suggested, and sauntered about between the untrimmed hedges and the neglected flower-beds. Their conversation was as lively as it is apt to be between brothers. The lassitude they felt after the dissipation of last night, and which the ride on horseback had made them forget for a while, returned now more distressingly.

"I am tired as a dog," said Cuno, sitting down on a decayed wooden bench, and stretching out his legs.

"Do you think I am not?" said Odo, following his elder brother's example.

The brothers observed perfect silence, till Cuno suddenly asked :

“ Did you tell the old one ? ”

“ When could I tell her ? ” replied Odo, angrily, and looking a few years older than usual.

“ It is high time though. ”

“ I know it, ” growled Odo in the same tone.

“ Well, you may do as you choose, ” said the older brother, yawning.

“ It is easy enough for you to talk ! ” cried the other one, bitterly ; “ who was it that insisted upon cards last night, when no one else wanted to play ? ”

“ But who told you to bet so madly ? ”

“ Nice question ! I should think you knew what I want money for. ”

“ That wretch Mollendorf had his usual good luck, ” said the lieutenant.

“ Ah ! I don’t mind Mollendorf, ” replied the ensign ; “ he will wait a few days and give me my revenge ; but Abraham won’t wait. It is enough to kill a man, ” and the young man’s stupid eyes glared with despair.

“ How much is it ? ”

“ Fifty louis, and I haven’t a penny left ! ”

“ That’s why I say you ought to tell the old one and lose no time. ”

“ But the old one will be beside herself ; and if the governor hears of it—— ”

Odo jumped up from his seat and walked up and down a few times ; then he threw himself on the bench again.

“ Can’t you give me some advice, Cuno ? ”

The lieutenant shrugged his shoulders. “ I have no credit anywhere, ” he growled.

“ It is a real dog’s life, ” began Odo once more, after a pause ; “ our miserable pay and a few dollars pocket money, as if a man could live decently upon that ! and the governor never has any money. Upon my word I should like to know what he does with it. ”

“ He does not bury it, you may be sure of that ! ” sneered the older brother with a grin.

“ But then he ought not to ride the high horse with us as he does. What is good for him is good for us. ”

"Maybe!—but that don't help you out of your trouble," said the lieutenant. "What do you say, Odo, suppose you were to tell *him*?"—he pointed with his sword at the château—"perhaps he has his good day to-day."

"Cuno, you must be mad!" cried Odo, staring at his brother with undisguised amazement.

"When the devil is hungry, he will eat flies," said the lieutenant.

Odo reflected on the suggestion like a man who has been advised to save his life by jumping down from a tower three hundred feet high. He shook his head.

"Can't be done," he murmured. "Out of the question. I'd rather tell the old one."

"Or if you were to write to Aunt Antonia?"

"In the first place she is out of town; and secondly, I don't believe she would bleed again; we have bled her too often lately; I'll talk to the old one, she'll find some way."

"That is probably the best thing you can do," said the lieutenant, shutting the penknife with which he had been trimming his nails, and rising. "I think our time is out; let us see if we can get something to eat; nice feed it will be, I dare say."

"The company met at the appointed time in the small breakfast-room, under madame's direction, but the meal surpassed even the lieutenant's dismal expectations. The eggs were far from fresh, the ham tough, the bread sour, and the butter strong. And yet the guests praised it all, and the lieutenant even declared that the sour home-made wine was delicious.

After breakfast the president's wife proposed a walk down to the village to meet the steamer on which the president and the colonel were to come up about this time. They all started, except Camilla, who complained of a headache and begged to be excused.

The ensign saw that the hour had come when he must tell his mother his troubles, if they were to be told at all. He offered her his arm, and managed it so that they fell behind while the lieutenant honored his aunt and Aurelia with his conversation. Unfortunately, Odo found his mother in a terrible state of mind, which seemed to be very unfavorable to his plans. She spoke in terms which hardly appeared

quite suitable for the daughter of the great Count Duren-Lilienfeld, of the insults she had endured, called Dame Bridget an old witch, her sister-in-law a deceitful cat, the young ladies detestable doll-babies—and whatever else she could think of to give relief to her passionate and malignant temper.

“But I shall drive back this evening,” she wound up; “I won’t let the dogs keep me awake all night long, whatever your father may say to the contrary; but any way he does not seem to trouble himself much about my wishes of late!”

For the ensign this was probably the worst turn the conversation could possibly take; but despair gives courage. He begged his mother for heaven’s sake not to irritate the colonel, as he—the ensign—was “in an awful fix;” and then came the doleful story, accompanied by a pitiful smile, which was intended to be humorous. He told her how he had borrowed from the Jew Abraham fifty louis in order to pay a debt of honor, and how Abraham now threatened him to report the matter to Odo’s colonel if the sum was not forthcoming by to-morrow noon; that the colonel, a man of horribly old-fashioned notions, would make a great ado about the “miserable trifle,” and that Odo was in great danger of being cashiered if the *affaire* was not “buried” in some way or other. A drop causes overflow in a vessel already full to the edge. To his mother’s angry spirit Odo’s words were that drop. She was beside herself, as he had prophesied. If she did not box his ears, it was only because she did not wish to afford her sister-in-law such a triumph; she was content, therefore, to call the future commander a good-for-nothing boy, a miserable creature, a wretch, who was fast sending his poor mother into the grave.

The ensign had been exposed to the fire of his mother’s wrath too often not to know how to stand it. He let his mother rage until he saw that her passionate heat was on the point of dissolving into tears, and then he said with well played resignation:

“Never mind, dear mamma; all your scolding does not bring me the money, for which I care more for your sake than my own. At the worst, I can only get a few weeks at the guard-house, and then I shall be cashiered; but I am sorry for papa, because in his position the thing would be

rather disagreeable to him. And then I am sorry for you, too, because aunt and the others will never stop talking about it."

The cunning fellow had presented his affair in the most favorable aspect by these suggestions. Mamma forgot entirely that by encouraging the young man's recklessness she was only smoothing for him the descent to Avernus. She only thought of her husband's comrades, how they would shrug their shoulders in pity for him; and of the secret joy of her sister-in-law, and the other ladies of her acquaintance—and then Odo had always been her favorite, and, great God! how pale and wretched the poor boy looked!

"I will see what can be done," she said, once more taking her son's arm, which she had dropped in the first explosion of her wrath; "I will speak to your father. Now don't worry yourself, or you'll really be sick. Above all, don't let your aunt find out anything. Let us walk a little faster, so they may not notice our staying behind."

But this staying behind had been noticed and correctly interpreted by Aurelia's shrewdness. "That dear Odo undoubtedly has heavy sins to confess," she said. "Where did you young gentlemen go to last night, after leaving us? Brinkman, whom we met riding out this morning, suggested that you had probably had cards at Catalini's."

"Oh pshaw, cousin, how can you imagine we would care for the excitement of cards after the excitement of a ball?—especially of such a delightful ball."

"To be sure," replied Aurelia; "how could he think so? When the ladies are perfectly crazy about a man, what does he care for the queens of cards."

"And yet, if report speaks truly, your avowed admirer, Brinkman, does not dislike those queens particularly."

"Who says Brinkman is an admirer of mine?" asked the young girl, not without some vehemence.

"Well, I don't think he was in the saddle at six o'clock in the morning for nothing," laughed the lieutenant.

"I think you are carrying the joke a little too far, dear Cuno," said the president's wife, coming to the assistance of her daughter, who really liked the young officer of hussars particularly well.

"I did not commence teasing," said Cuno.

“But then you are a gentleman, and must submit to the ladies, without becoming personal.”

Cuno was on the point of replying, but he thought it more prudent not to irritate the mother of beautiful Camilla, whom he loved as far as he could love, partly for her beauty, and partly from vanity. But the conversation flagged, and they were quite willing, therefore, to rejoin the two who had stayed behind, although they also were in a frame of mind which was not very favorable for brisk conversation. Fortunately they had no sooner reached the village of Rheinfeld, than they saw the steamboat come down the river. A yawl pushed off to bring the passengers to shore, and in a few minutes the two brothers were on the wharf.

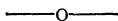
The two brothers Hohenstein resembled each other in nothing but their thinness and their height. Philip, the president, was from the crown of his small, well-shaped head with the dark, short hair, silvered here and there, down to the soles of his varnished boots, every inch the high official of the old school. His face was shaven smoothly so as to bring out more clearly his finely-cut features, and his whole appearance was in unison with his calm, diplomatic manner, his low voice, and even the fine broadcloth of his dress-coat, with the ribbon of the Order of the Falcon in the button-hole.

If the president betrayed his desire to please almost too manifestly, the colonel was apparently quite careless about the impression he produced. His face was as little attractive as possible, with its sunburnt complexion, and its beard dyed black, but kept short according to army regulations. His gray eyes had that fixedness which betrays an unamiable, violent temper. His voice had become unpleasantly rough and hoarse, probably from over-exertion on parade, if not in-consequence of an organic defect. To look at the man, one would not have doubted much the stories that were current about his rudeness and brutality towards inferiors, for even his gallantry to ladies had something sneering and cynical about it, a peculiarity which is not uncommon in dissipated men.

Such were the two men who were met on the wharf by their families. There seemed to-day to be an evil star influencing the fate of the whole Hohenstein family; for it was

evident, at the first glance, that the two gentlemen also were not in the best humor in the world. The colonel had been intensely annoyed by the conduct of some young men on board the boat, who had been singing republican songs, hurrahing for Schleswig Holstein, and actually cheering for a German republic. He had been persuaded with much difficulty, by the president, to go down into the cabin in order to avoid the young men, who were evidently disposed to provoke the frowning officer. Below, in the cabin, the two brothers had talked about politics; and in the course of the conversation, the colonel had accused the president of cowardice, adding to this charge others which even the most diplomatic mind is not always willing or able to bear in patience.

Thus they walked, one behind the other, in very bad humor, through the wheat-fields and the vineyards towards the château. The colonel led with his wife, who dared not just then trouble her husband with Odo's unlucky affairs; then followed the president and his ladies, who confided to him the doleful occurrences of the morning; and last of all came the two young men, who did not think it worth while to manufacture conversation.



CHAPTER III.

IN the meantime Camilla had tried her best to make use of the hour for the plan that her cunning little head had conceived in the morning; and since fortune favors the fair, as is but natural, she had not lost her time nor her trouble.

Mother and sister and relations had no sooner left the house, than the young lady made her way to "madame," who was in the kitchen, and asked the great minister for a little vinegar to bathe her aching temples. So modest a request could not well be refused, especially as it was made in the kindest and most humble manner. She had given the young lady her vinegar; and as the latter seemed to be near

fainting, when she left the kitchen with profuse thanks on her lips, madame had actually felt something like human kindness, and condescended, in her sympathy, to bathe the beautiful brow with her own hands. But her hard, bony fingers had no sooner pushed the hair from the temples, than two soft eyes glanced up at her, two pretty hands seized her bony claws, and a sweet voice whispered: "Ah! how good that feels! How very kind and dear you are!"

Mrs. Bridget was startled. The praise sounded too strange to her ears, unaccustomed as they were to such language, and she was cunning and suspicious at once. She cast a sidelong glance at the young girl, and said in her dry, cold way:

"Death alone can be had for nothing. What are you after?"

"How do you mean, madame?" said the young girl with admirably feigned ingenuousness.

"Why is miss so very gracious all of a sudden?" said Bridget, sneeringly. "Do you think I am stupid enough to believe all the fine things the great people from town come and tell me? Do you think I do not know that all of you, yes, every one of you, would treat me like a dog if I did not happen to have some influence over that one—" and she pointed at the door which led to the inner apartments.

"But, my dearest, best madame," cried the girl, raising her voice as if in great indignation; "how can you be so suspicious. I dare say people flatter you, and most of what they say is not true; but I am sure I have never given you cause for such a suspicion. I assure you I mean what I say. I have the best disposition towards you."

"Hush! hush!" growled Bridget, squinting more fearfully than ever; "much cry and little wool! I verily believe you wish——"

Mrs. Bridget had not time to say what she thought the young lady wished to do, for suddenly the general's hoarse, hollow voice was heard from the adjoining room:

"What is the matter, Bridget? With whom are you talking?"

"Did not I say so!" screamed the old woman. "Make haste and get out of here; are you going?"

But it was too late, even if the young lady had been more

prompt than she chose to be ; for the door opened, and the general appeared on the threshold, in his velvet dressing-gown and with the white night-cap still on his head.

The general had not seen his great-niece for a year (in the garden, just now, he had refused to see her), and the young lady's beauty had in the meantime come out so fully, that he thought he saw her now for the first time, as she stood there, really embarrassed, at a little distance before him, her cheeks blushing, her eyes raised imploringly to him, and her hands lifted up half-way, as if to deprecate his displeasure.

"See there, little witch!" he said, and his bushy eyebrows kept winking up and down ; "why does the monkey stand there as if a thunderbolt had come down upon her? Do you think your granduncle is going to eat you up alive? You are pretty enough, to be sure! Come here and kiss your old uncle!"

Camilla cast a quick glance at Bridget, who stood by, trembling in all her limbs ; then she hastened towards her granduncle and pressed her rosy lips repeatedly upon his rough hands.

"Don't be afraid of her," said the general, who had noticed Camilla's look ; "she is not quite as bad as she looks just now, and likes to see her old excellency have a *tête-à-tête* with a pretty little gosling, especially when that gosling is his grandniece. Come in here, little witch, and you, old one, go to your work."

With these words the general drew the girl closer to him, while Bridget left the room, murmuring some unintelligible words between her teeth.

The old man grinned sneeringly after her. "Ready to burst with anger," he said ; "wish she would do it ; wouldn't send for the doctor to patch her up again. Now come, little witch, that's right!"

The general rested his arm on the girl's neck and let her lead him through the adjoining room—his bed-chamber—into the next room. Here he seated himself in a comfortable arm-chair, while Camilla, who knew his ways, busily brought up a footstool and wrapped his feet in a woollen blanket.

"Why, you are a trump of a girl," said the old man, chucking her under her round chin with his trembling hands, as she knelt down before him ; "you do it as deftly as if

you had never in your life done anything else but wrap my old bones in flannel, and you are as pretty as sin, too ; even your enemies cannot deny that."

"I am glad if I please you, dear granduncle," said Camilla, rising and smiling roguishly at the old general.

"Glad? Why should you be glad?"

"Because you might keep me here a little while and let me nurse you, granduncle, and that would delight me," said Camilla, taking one of the old gentleman's hands and pressing it to her bosom.

"Why, upon my word!" laughed the old man; "how the girl talks; like a book! Would delight her—nurse me! You have learnt your lesson well; you shall have a lump of sugar, little parrot. Well, well, you need not blush! As the old ones sing, the young ones twitter."

"I am not a parrot, granduncle," said the young lady; "what I say, I mean."

"Do you? Really? And if I took you at your word, how long would you stand it here, with your old uncle?"

"That would depend, granduncle. Let me stay with you; and when you are tired of me, you can send me back again."

"The girl is not as stupid as she looks," said the general with an undisguised admiration. "I really believe you might manage the old woman."

"Why not, granduncle, if you will only be kind to me, and not scold the good woman in my presence, as you did just now."

"She is really not so bad," repeated the general; "it would be a good joke—what's the matter now?"

Kilian, the surly servant, announced that the ladies and gentlemen were all there now, and madame wanted to know if dinner should be brought in.

"Yes, in the devil's name! Can't you leave me alone a moment?"

The man was about to go out. "Halt! Front face!" cried the general. "Come back here! Dress me! People to the dining-room! One general mess. And now run away, little monkey. We'll see about it."

Camilla kissed her granduncle's hands repeatedly and disappeared through a door which led from the room into the park.

CHAPTER IV.

A QUARTER of an hour later all the visitors at Rheinfeld were assembled in the "great hall" in the second story, where dinner was laid.

The great hall was a magnificent room, extending almost through the whole depth of the château; for the enormous, richly-gilt entrance-door opened upon the gallery of the hall below, and the two lofty glass-doors on the other smaller side of the room gave access to the large stone balcony, which was borne up by four columns and overhung the park. From the longer sides two doors in each led to other apartments. From the lofty ceiling with rich stucco ornaments hung three immense chandeliers of Bohemian crystal. Large oil paintings covered the walls. Upon the two mantelpieces stood costly vases and other vessels of Sevres and Dresden china. Although modern taste might object to some details of this splendor, dating back to the beginning of the last century; although the frescoes were generally very coarse, and the paintings of at least doubtful character; and although the broad gilt frames, as well as the damask coverings of the furniture, showed the effects of age—the whole made, after all, an imposing impression, which could not easily be shaken off.

The faces of the visitors betrayed this very clearly. The mountain which seemed to have weighed upon the minds of all of them during the whole forenoon, was apparently heavier than ever. They spoke little, and what they said was whispered. They walked cautiously on the smooth inlaid floor, or stood close to the walls, gazing at the naked gods and goddesses and the fat Chinese pagodas, as if it was the first time they had seen all this splendor. Only Camilla showed more composure, and her brown eyes beamed with a triumphant smile, as she stood there, leaning one hand upon the high back of a chair, and watching the disturbed, pitiful looks of the others. She had not said a word of the strange interview with her granduncle to any one, not even to her own family.

His excellency kept them waiting a long time. The

president went up to his brother and said, looking at his watch :

"Three o'clock!—we shall be late. You are going back to-night, are you not?"

"I and the boys, most assuredly," growled the colonel, "have to be at our posts ; the drums may beat at any moment nowadays. Selma may stay ; though I hardly think she will ; she is horribly out of humor."

"Well, that is the case with all of us more or less, I should think," whispered the president. "For my part, I do not like these visits. *Apropos* of visits! Arthur called yesterday. Of course I was not at home to him."

"He called on me, too," said the colonel, surprised. "I was not in. What can it mean?"

The president shrugged his shoulders. "Perhaps election matters—Arthur is a great man in the Reform League nowadays. I have been almost sorry I did not see him. As matters are just now, it might have been wiser to renew our relations. No one can tell."

"Of course," sneered the colonel, "worship the rising sun! You don't think that foolish thing can stand?"

"No ; but we can drop him again when all is over."

"Do as you like," said the colonel, rudely ; "I do not want to have anything to do with the blackguard. There comes the old man."

The large folding-doors opened and his excellency entered, leaning on his valet on one side and on Bridget on the other. He was in full uniform, with which the huge flannel shoes on his feet formed a most ludicrous contrast. Thus he shuffled around the room, without stopping near any one, merely nodding right and left to the company, who bowed and offered congratulations.

"Ah! *bon jour! bon jour!* Happy to see my dear relatives. Sit down wherever you find a seat ; this little witch will sit near me!"

Camilla, who had been waiting for his command, hastened up and helped the old gentleman into his arm-chair and then sat down by his side, assuming a most modest air. Bridget took her seat opposite the general, behind the soup-tureen, and the others arranged themselves around the table, as chance directed.

The feast at Macbeth's royal castle cannot have been more melancholy than that dinner at Castle Hohenstein. Instead of the one honest ghost of Banquo, there were I know not how many ghosts present here ; they poisoned the bread and wine, darkened the hearts and the brows, paralyzed the tongues and falsified the words, so that it looked positively incomprehensible how beings endowed with reason could voluntarily submit to such torture. The old man was ruder than ever ; coarse with the men, cynical with the women, full of scorn for them all, not excepting even Camilla, although he pinched that young lady's cheeks from time to time and called her his "pretty little witch." He was almost the only one who talked, he told long stories about the wars, about plundering and sacking towns and other horrors, which ordinarily are carefully avoided in good society where ladies are present. Then he talked of the time after the war, when he had bought Rheinfeld and the adjoining estate with the fortune he had inherited from his father and the ample prize money he had earned, at the same time that his brother, the father of the two Hohensteins present, had become civil governor of the province. And then came a chapter in the family record, which everybody present knew by heart, as the old man had told it over and over again with ever new delight—the chapter of the increasing wealth of the general and the gradual impoverishment of the governor.

"And how did that come about, Selma? I'll tell you. Because my poor devil of a brother had married an immensely great and noble damsel, who had not a red cent of her own, but on the other hand—can you imagine such people, Clotilda?—an eminent talent for spending money, and an equally strange capacity of recruiting her army at home ; every fall a new levy ! How many were you in all, Philip?"

"Eight," whispered the president.

"And now there are three left ; and I, old ten-pin that I am, I am still standing, and hope to see one or the other topple over, before I fall. But how has it turned out so? Because I have kept away from women—or at least, because I have been wise enough never to take one that I could not send away again when I disliked her—a housekeeper or some such thing."

In this strain he continued until an accidental allusion

to the politics of the day gave the others an opportunity to be heard ; whereupon the colonel, as usual, launched forth in the most violent denunciations against "those accursed republicans and communists," thus giving vent to his momentarily increasing wrath.

"I wish I were master for only a month," he cried in his hoarse, angry voice, "and from here to the Russian frontier there should not be one of them that did not creep into a mouse-hole as soon as a bayonet came near him. But instead of knocking the rabble over with canister, they go to work and negotiate and hold 'meetings for consultations about the constitution!' On the first of May they are to begin. My brother competes with a dismissed college tutor, a miserable book writer—I believe the fellow's name is Doctor Munzer—for the honor of being elected a member of this honorable assembly. Isn't that enough to make a man mad?"

"Dear brother," whispered the president, "we shall——"

"Speak louder!" cried the general; "no one can hear your whining."

The president blushed and continued with somewhat louder voice :

"I was only going to say, dear uncle, that my good brother, in his quick, military way, does not make due allowance for the spirit of the times. No one, I am sure, can be more averse than I am to this whole unnatural movement, which we have imported from France, and which a few restless agitators keep alive and propagate in our midst. But I think that when a mad bull comes roaring against us, and threatening to gore us, it is wiser to get out of his way than to try and seize him by the horns. The bull is sure to run against a wall ; and when he is down, stunned and helpless, it is easy to bind the brute and carry him back to the stall. It seems to me, that is just the case with this movement. A parliamentary government is all nonsense ; the rabble is the rabble, and the poor cannot be helped by all the wild theories of socialists and communists. When the people are tired of crying themselves hoarse, they will see all this themselves ; which does not mean, however"—the president smiled—"that I should not think it expedient to help them occasionally with a few tangible arguments *in hominem*."

"What do you call occasionally?" said the colonel. "It seems to me that it is best to fight for the king at all times. If you once admit these 'consultations' and 'constitutions,' and whatever else they call this nonsense, you will soon see what concessions you will have to make, in spite of all your wisdom."

"Perhaps matters are not quite so bad yet, my dear brother," replied the president. "When two parties meet for reconciliation and there is no umpire appointed, the stronger of the two must get the better of the other. Therefore such an assembly as this has the fatal germ of destruction in it from the beginning; or do you think, my dear brother, I would be a candidate for a seat if it were not sure to be so?"

"And the meeting at Frankfurth?"

The president smiled. "That dream of German unity," he said, "will soon come to an end. The Germans wear republican beards, but in their hearts they are very good monarchists. They will not touch their sovereigns; and until the Hohenzollerns, and the Hapsburgs, the Guelphs, and the Ghibellines have all agreed on a constitution, until then many a year will pass and things remain as they are."

"Well, and how do things look in town?" asked the general.

"Apparently pretty bad," replied the president; "we are in the midst of great agitation about the elections. The opposition is in trouble; they do not know whom to send to Berlin and whom to Frankfurth, especially as they have not exactly an abundance of able men. The leaders, too, are at variance with each other. There are their radicals who wish to upset the whole government, and to build up their Utopia on the *tabula rasa*, with their head, Doctor Munzer. He is president of the Republican League, as they call it, and has the masses on his side, because he is—nominally, at least—a Catholic, and a native of this district. By the side of this radical party there is a so-called constitutional party, which does not desire a general overthrow, and which includes all moderate men, from the strictly conservative royalist to the liberal lover of progress. Their every other word is 'Constitution.' I confess I have thought it expedient, as times are, to join this latter party, for a while

at least, although that brings me in contact with people whom I would otherwise carefully avoid.

During this conversation the dessert had been brought in ; and as the general, quite contrary to his usual habit, had encouraged his guests to drink, by word and example, a somewhat better tone began to prevail, when suddenly the low rumbling of a carriage was heard from the court-yard. The general gave the housekeeper an almost imperceptible sign with his bushy brows, and Mrs. Bridget left the table. None of the other guests noticed this, for the general had immediately asked :

“ Well, and your brother Arthur ? I see in the papers that he delivers great speeches in your club ! ”

For some years the general had never spoken of this third son of his brother, and seemed to be hardly aware that he was still among the living. It was quite natural, therefore, that this mention of Uncle Arthur excited universal attention, even among the younger members of the company, especially as his excellency had asked the question in a peculiarly loud tone.

“ That is one of the drawbacks to which I alluded,” said the president. “ You know how entirely my political views differ from those of my unfortunate brother, and how I have thought it due to my position—like Gisbert—to break off all intercourse with a man who was not ashamed to give a Miss Schmitz the name of Hohenstein, and yet ”—the president shrugged his shoulders—“ the thing cannot be helped. If we do not wish to lose all influence over the people, we must——”

“ Sit down to table with publicans and sinners,” the general added sneeringly ; “ why not ? Wouldn’t we put our legs under the devil’s mahogany—for a consideration ? Wouldn’t we, colonel ? ”

The colonel thought it his duty to clear his skirts of such an imputation, both because he was a soldier and because his views seemed to agree with the general’s.

“ By no means,” he said. “ I, for my part, would never sacrifice my own convictions for the sake of any advantage I could obtain. Arthur has cut himself off from us by his plebeian match and his republican views, which are doubly disgraceful in him as an ex-officer. We have done nothing.

He has to blame no one but himself, therefore, if we show him our contempt."

During this little speech the general had looked so frequently at the door, knitting his eye-brows most oddly and twisting his huge white moustache most energetically, that all except the colonel were struck by it, and felt that something extraordinary was about to happen.

"How sorry I am to hear that," cried the general; "for it embarrasses me sorely. I thought I would be doing wondrously well if I should bring you all together once more in my old days; but, to be sure, if matters stand thus—I fear it is too late now—well, did not I say so? Here we have it!"

The huge folding-doors opened suddenly and in walked a stately gentleman, who had a beautiful pale woman on his arm. Behind him came a tall young man. When they had entered, the doors closed once more.

The arrival of Uncle Arthur with his wife and his son Wolfgang, who was a student, was so unexpected and, to most of the family, so very embarrassing, that they rose from their chairs electrified, and with them the old general, overtopping them by a head, and crying out sneeringly:

"Shall I say grace, children? I hope dinner may agree well with you, children! 'tis so pretty to see brethren dwell together in peace and harmony. Good-day, nephew! That is your wife, eh?—and that your son? Glad to make your acquaintance. Here are your dear relatives—Baroness Hohenstein, *née* Countess Duren-Lilienfeld——"

"I have the honor," said the good lady, pale with anger, but courtesying very politely.

"Ah! you have the honor? Glad to hear it," cried the old gentleman; "is more than I expected. Have you also the honor, Clotilda?"

"Of course, of course!" replied the president's wife; "we have met frequently, though not directly. I am very glad to make your personal acquaintance; I am heartily glad!" and the diplomatic lady went up to the fair, pale new-comer, who was trembling with excitement, and embraced her warmly.

"These are my daughters, Aurelia and Camilla. Dear children, this is you aunt——"

"Margaret," supplied the pale lady, smiling, when the president's wife suddenly paused, very much embarrassed.

"What a pretty name!" exclaimed Camilla, shaking hands with enthusiasm.

While Arthur turned to his brothers and was received by the president with smooth politeness and by the colonel with haughty coldness, Wolfgang had bowed to the whole company collectively and was now quietly standing aside, looking fixedly at his mother, as if the whole scene had no interest for him, except so far as it concerned her.

"And what is your name?" suddenly cried the general, stepping up to the young man and examining him in his rude way from head to foot.

"Wolfgang!" replied the youth, by no means intimidated by the sharp eyes under the nervous brows.

"How old?"

"Twenty-one!"

"What are you doing?"

"I am studying law. But, I beg your pardon, I see mamma wants me."

And Wolfgang, bowing slightly, turned from the general, who looked at him in surprise, and went to his mother, whom he asked: "Wouldn't better sit down, mamma?"

He took the pale lady, who had indeed been growing weaker every moment, by the arm, and led her to an arm-chair outside of the circle by which she was surrounded, saying to her in a low voice: "You are quite exhausted, mamma; you would better rest a while."

"But what will——"

"The people say? Let them take care of themselves! I'll stay with you."

In the meantime the general had enjoyed the beautiful family scene which he had so ingeniously prepared.

"Shall I say grace, children?" he cried. "You must amuse yourselves as best you can. I must say good-by till to-morrow. Or do any of you possibly wish to say good-by now?"

During these words the general looked hard at the colonel and his family.

The colonel had been talking aside and in a low whisper to his wife and his sons. He wished to leave; he did not want to be fooled any longer; the whole scene had evidently been arranged by the old man for their mortification.

Selma was too clever and too cunning not to see how matters stood, and comprehended at once that it was best to make a virtue of necessity ; hence she would have liked to compromise, but the colonel would not listen ; and although under other circumstances she would probably have insisted upon playing the game out at her own risk, she was now compelled by Odo's threatening embarrassment to follow her angry husband. The general's last words could not be misunderstood, and decided the matter.

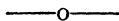
They went up to him, as he was taking his servant's arm, and said :

"Unfortunately, I have to beg leave to say good-by for myself and my children ; duty calls me back to town."

"Want to go? Well, go with God's blessing, children, go with God's blessing," said the old man ; and as he said this he nodded his bald head so constantly, and the bristles over his eyes jerked so spasmodically, that there was no mistaking his delight at the success of his trick.

The president also came up to say good-by for **himself**.

"For yourself?" cried the general ; "no objection ! but your women folks will stay. Not a word ! Madame, show the Baroness Arthur Hohenstein to her rooms. Grand-nephew Wolfgang, entertain the ladies ; show them that you know something besides law. And you, nephew Arthur, give me your arm and help me to my room. I want to talk to you."



CHAPTER V.

AT noon of the next day, not one of the whole company but Camilla and Wolfgang was left at Rheinfeld.

The president's wife, who had gone to town with the others, was expected back in the evening, but she was evidently invited only for the purpose of serving as *dame d'honneur* to her beautiful daughter. Nor did she herself look at it otherwise. She had embraced her dear Camilla the night before with tears in her eyes, congratulating her on the favorable impression she seemed to have made on

the granduncle. The alderman also had left the general, after a second interview, in a state of great excitement ; and drawing his son aside, had told him that the reconciliation with his granduncle was complete, and that he derived from this first step the most pleasing expectations for the future. The general had told him in terms as obliging as those in which his letter of invitation had been written, that he wished to keep his grandnephew at Rheinfeld a few days, since it was partly his (the general's) own fault that he did not know him before. "Just think, Wolfgang, his own fault ! That may lead to something," added the alderman, delightedly rubbing his hands. "Stay for my sake !" said the mother, who had come up and noticed how her son's face had darkened during his father's speech. An hour afterwards the president's wife, and Aurelia, Arthur, and Margaret, had left in the general's glass coach, and Wolfgang and Camilla had followed the carriage with their eyes, till it had driven out of the great portal of the court-yard. Madame, who had been in particularly good humor, helping the ladies into the carriage, had gone in, and the two young people, still standing in the door, looked at each other. Wolfgang burst out laughing.

"If I did not happen to know that all this was real, I should certainly think I was only reading it in a novel."

Camilla let her silken lashes veil her eyes. "Do I look to you like a princess in a novel ?"

"Not exactly ; but all around me here is so entirely different from what I am accustomed to, that I feel as if I were in another world. How long do you propose remaining here ?"

"I do not know what granduncle and mamma have settled between them. And you ?"

"Nor do I know. I hope, however, not very long ; for I am cruelly puzzled to know what I shall do during the days I shall have to sacrifice to granduncle's extraordinary whims."

"Most gallant Cousin Wolfgang," said Camilla, with a roguish glance from her soft brown eyes.

"How so ?" asked the young man with unfeigned wonder.

"I must go in to see madame about my room. Excuse me."

Camilla nodded haughtily—an art in which the young lady excelled—and went into the house.

Wolfgang looked after her a few moments. He felt instinctively that he had offended the young lady, but he was too busy with his own thoughts to take the matter to heart.

He lounged about in the park—what else could he do?—and sauntered at random through the neglected walks. The situation in which he found himself had come upon him so suddenly, and so entirely without any effort of his own, and, in fact, so much against his will and inclination, that he could not overcome the idea of being in a dream. Was this really the house of that granduncle of whom his mother had spoken so often ; the house which he had looked upon as an enchanted castle, and in which as a child he had located the stories of Bluebeard and the boy who went out to learn how to be afraid. And did it not really look very much as his fancy had depicted it ? This very morning he had thought of it, when madame had shown the whole company over the house, opening to his amazed eyes the whole suite of apartments with their faded splendor of damask coverings and idyllic scenes on wall and ceiling. And, to complete it all, the armory, which granduncle had commenced years ago, a whole hall filled with arms of later and earlier years : Roman swords, dug out at Rheinfeld when the foundation was laid for the present château ; halberts, morning stars, battle-axes, maces, two-handed swords, Turkish sabres, daggers long and short, and other murderous weapons ; among them a complete and most valuable collection of every kind of gun, rifle, carbine, and pistol that had been used by the different nationalities engaged in the great wars of Napoleon. And now, above all, the park which in its devastation looked even older and stranger than Castle Rheinfeld itself, because the contrast between the neglected efforts of art here contrasted more strongly with the ever young and irrepressible vigor of nature. For more than ten years no human hand seemed to have been at work here. Ulysses might have hid himself and his companions in the dry leaves which so many autumnal storms had swept together under the broad-branched chestnut-trees. A magnificent greenhouse near the château was a deserted ruin, filled with potsherds, rotting plants and exuberant weeds, in which the first newly-fledged broods of countless sparrows were quarrelling undisturbed. A small temple, overshadowed by tall trees, had

not fared much better ; the inscription, which stated that the builder had consecrated it "to Friendship," was hardly legible. The cupola had fallen down, and in its fall destroyed several statues that once stood on pedestals. All around and amid the débris which now covered the floor, nearly a foot high, foxes and martens seemed to have held their bloody banquets, if one might judge from the scattered feathers and carefully gnawed bones. Everywhere in the walks of the park, weeds were luxuriating between the rotting trunks and the thick undergrowth ; here and there, from amid briars and brambles, weather-beaten statues of sandstone peeped forth, rarely if ever boasting of heads and arms.

The further Wolfgang entered into this wilderness, the stranger he felt. It certainly looked like a dream. In this deserted place, everything that the hand of man had created was abandoned to decay and destruction ; and even the bright, warm afternoon sun had something spectral about it ; and the twittering and singing of the birds, as they were building their nests, sounded like faint, dying voices from a far-off youthful age.

He sat down on a bench placed within a niche, which was almost hid under a thick veil of ivy. The open space before him, which seemed to have been a flower parterre, was surrounded on all sides by hedges of evergreens. The whole world seemed to be forgotten here ; and as he sat resting his head in his hands, he fell into a state which was neither waking nor sleeping, and during which the images of his fancy had a dreamy reality, while yet the thread of his thoughts was left unbroken.

He saw himself a small, sickly boy wandering with his school-books under his arm through the narrow, winding streets of the venerable old city on the Rhine. The morning sun was shining warm and sweet on the gables of the houses ; and all the confused noises of a populous city, from the ringing of the bells in the towers of lofty cathedrals to the yelling voice of hucksters who praised their ware, and the gay crowds busily hastening to and fro, the huge wagons, the countless foot passengers, soldiers marching by with bright guns shining in the sun, and drums and fifes sounding loud, long processions with fluttering banners and monotonous chants—how all this passed before his mind's eye, as it

had once imprinted itself in clearest detail on the open senses of the child ! And now he is sitting in the long, narrow school-room, among a host of little boys, all of them scribbling busily in their copy-books ; and he is looking at the vaulted ceiling, where the reflex of the sun dancing on the teacher's glass of water is forming golden rings and rays, till suddenly a rough hand shakes him and a rough voice says : " Is that an A, and that a B, you bad boy ? "—and amid all the great joys and the small sorrows of his earliest years there appears ever and anon a beautiful, dear, pale face ; and as he grows older and more and more intelligent he sees it more frequently, it looks ever fairer and dearer to him. He sees it bending over him as he lies sick in bed ; he sees it look over his shoulder into his copy-book ; he sees it smile sweetly as he boasts of all the heroic deeds he is going to achieve in after life ; he sees it run over with tears when his wild boyish vehemence has terrified the best and kindest of mothers. But that is a rare case, for he loves his mother, he worships her. To him she personifies all that is fair and good upon earth ; he feels an irresistible desire to live with her, to tell her everything that agitates his full young heart ; for he has never had either brother or sister, with whom he might share her love. His mother is his only confidante, and then, very soon, comes the time when he is her confidante also. She is often sick ; and while his friends walk past the house where pretty girls are at the window, or defy the school regulations by drinking stealthily a bottle of sour wine at a low inn, he remains for hours and hours by her bedside, holding her small white hand in his own, or cooling her burning temples, and feeling happy when her long, slow breathing seems to prove the magnetic influence which the mother ascribes to his touch. When she is free from pain she often speaks of her relations in life. She pities his poor father, who, in marrying her, the poor humbly-born girl, has forfeited all the brilliant prospects to which he was entitled by his rank as an officer, his noble descent, his influential relatives, even his manly beauty and his varied talents. His marriage had interrupted his career and set him at variance with his family, especially with the old general at Rheinfeld, who need only say a word to release him from all the embarrassments into which he has drifted through his very natural and par-

donable ignorance of business. These difficulties, into which the clever boy is thus early initiated through his mother's communications and through many painful domestic scenes, which he cannot help witnessing, are like a dark cloud throwing its shadow upon the sunny landscape of his youth. Thus, at an age when most other boys do not yet look beyond the horizon of the house and the school, he learns to think of the serious conflicts of life. The neighbors' children laugh at him on account of his careful language and his better manners ; they tease him about his noble descent, while the sons of noblemen at the same school sneer at his father's business on change. He hears people speak with respect of his father's great relations, whom he hardly knows by sight, and who completely ignore his father, his mother, and himself, while the plebeian connections of his mother are rarely mentioned, and yet they have shown him nothing but the greatest kindness, and he knows they have often and often given his father good advice, or yet more valuable assistance. This makes the boy uncertain as to the world's judgment ; but these doubts, in their turn, strengthen his character and confirm him in his resolve to do himself what is right and to contribute all he can towards the rule of right and justice upon earth.

He was sustained in this tendency by his former teacher, whose liberal views had brought him in conflict with the authorities, and finally compelled him to resign his position ; he had now been for some years known as a "sharp" writer in newspapers and reviews. Poor Munzer ! Fate had not given him his name in vain ! For like his unfortunate ancestor, the leader of rebellious peasants in the bloody Peasant's Wars, he too had had to work his way through theological scholastics to religious freedom. And it is yeoman's blood that flows in his veins, and yeoman's strength that gives him the power to resist, year after year, the effects of want, incessant work, and a desperate struggle for his mere existence. "What would you say, noblest, best of friends, if you saw me, your pupil and faithful follower, sitting here in this magnificent park, created by aristocratic love of display, and suffered to go to decay by aristocratic caprice ?—if you found me here dreaming at a time when the world is out of joint and man's work everywhere in demand ?"

Wolfgang recollected just then that at this very hour a large meeting of students was taking place in the great hall of the university, in order to make arrangements for the formation of an armed *corps* of students. He had not been enthusiastic about a plan which seemed to him to contain too many elements of childish vanity and idle braggadocio. He wondered what Munzer would think of it, and what Munzer would say on the occasion. In his dreams he saw the mighty man ascend the tribune; he heard his deep soft voice, first indistinctly, then more and more clearly, and at last every word, as it fell from the eloquent lips upon the breathless multitude: "Ah, do not believe what your adversaries say! It is not an empty play that you are going to engage in, nor an idle honor which you covet. Let wiser men determine what is right and consider what is expedient, but in order to give strength to their resolutions and to procure a hearing for the voice of the senate on the noisy forum, youthful, prompt vigor must be at hand, men who are daring enough to act—even to strike a blow, if blows are necessary to make an impression. Or do you think the golden seed of liberty is like that seed which fell on good soil and brought fruit a hundred-fold and a thousand-fold? Do you think these old fogies can understand what liberty is all at once?—that priests and priest-ridden people will suddenly be delighted with a common brotherhood after having for ages persecuted and excommunicated all who differed from their creed? No, and again and again, no! I tell you, might is still right, and therefore right still needs to become stronger than might. That is the deep meaning of this playing with arms, which your adversaries call childish. Human rights in one hand and the sword in the other hand—thus only can liberty make her way through the nations of the earth. . ."

"And yet it is written: 'He who taketh the sword shall perish by the sword,'" said a soft voice close to Wolfgang's ear.

"Who is that?" cried the young man, startled, and rising from the bench.

"It is I!" said the soft voice, and a man, who had approached unnoticed through the park, stepped forth from behind the ivy-covered wall, pulled his cap off, and bowed several times in a strange, awkward manner.

Wolfgang examined the odd-looking man with great

astonishment. His first impression was, that he had before him one of those unfortunate men whose mind is imprisoned in the night of insanity ; but a second glance at the pale, peaceful face, with its clear blue eyes, full of childlike piety, taught him better, and kindly returning the humble greeting, he said :

“Who are you ?”

“My name is Hans,” said the man promptly, “Balthasar Hans. I see I have interrupted you in a monologue, and I pray you to forgive me, but I could not help it when I heard you say what, in my humble opinion—but I crave your pardon.”

And Balthasar, whom the young man’s inquiring look had embarrassed more and more, so that he rubbed the earthenware pitcher he was carrying in his hand harder and harder against his coat, bowed and was about to escape, but Wolfgang held him.

“You are probably going up to the house ; we can go together !”

“Oh, no, no ! I pray you ! I had entirely forgotten that I have strict orders not to show myself to any of the ladies and gentlemen. My way is *not* to the great house: Quite the contrary.”

Wolfgang’s curiosity was greatly excited by the man’s strange conduct and confused words. Who was this outcast, who must not be seen by the guests of the house ?

“Strict orders ! From whom ?” he asked, walking by the side of Balthasar.

“From her,” he replied, casting shy glances in the direction in which the château was lying.

“From her ! Who is she ? That dragon of a housekeeper, eh ?”

“Yes, from my wife,” said Balthasar, hastening his steps.

“She is your wife !” cried Wolfgang, involuntarily breaking out into loud laughter. “Ah ! now I understand your aversion to the house perfectly.”

“Do you really,” replied Balthasar. “You understand me ? I am a man of peace. I have no other wish than to live in peace and harmony with everybody. Why should I encounter her wrath ? I would rather go to bed hungry once more.”

A fluttering and chirping in the hedge along which they were walking, attracted Balthasar's attention. He carefully bent the branches aside and looked in.

"Oh, just look!" he said in a whisper, with a face beaming with delight; "just look!"

Three or four little birds, still unfledged, were lying in a tiny nest and opening wide their yellow beaks.

"Poor little things! Are you hungry?" said Balthasar, carefully replacing the branches. Then he began to search his pockets, till amid bits of twine, dried plants, and other stuff, he discovered a crust of bread, which he crumbled up and strewed on the ground near the hedge. "That'll be good for them. Now let us get away so as not to frighten the old ones. There they are, looking at us half curious and half frightened with their stupid, bright eyes."

Balthasar picked up the empty pitcher, which he had put down during the little scene.

"You seem to be a warm admirer of nature," said Wolfgang, as they went on.

"Who can help being so, having ears to hear and eyes to see—yes, and a nose to smell," exclaimed Balthasar, and as he spoke a slight flush tinged his pale cheeks. "I often sit under the trees and among the bushes, and when I have drunk in the glorious sight with all my senses, I often do not know if I am not the little white cloud sailing along on the blue sky, or the tiny bird in the branches singing his jubilant song, or the fresh green foliage which exhales a fragrant perfume all around me."

"You are a poet, sir," said Wolfgang, not a little amazed to hear such thoughts and such well-chosen language from an insignificant, wretched-looking being.

"Alas, no," replied Balthasar, timidly, "don't say that! I thought so once or twice in my life, but only in moments of foolish vanity, of which I was always heartily ashamed afterwards. How could I, ignorant man that I am, compare myself with the wisest and best of men! I never had many chances in my life to learn *much*; for what we are taught at the seminary, heaven knows, is little enough; and what little there is, turns out idle stuff quite often."

Balthasar broke off, frightened, and looked imploringly at his companion. "What I said just escaped without

my intending it," he said. "You won't be offended with me?"

"Oh, not at all!" replied Wolfgang, smiling. "On the contrary, I think you are but too right. You are, then, the Aristotle of the village youth?"

"Aristotle of the village youth?" said Balthasar; "that sounds pretty! Oh, I know very well who Aristotle was! a heathen philosopher, who taught the Macedonian King Alexander. His name occurs quite frequently in Lessing. Do you like Lessing?"

"Certainly, he is one of the greatest writers of our nation, and I have a great reverence for him."

"Have you indeed!" cried Balthasar, delighted. "That is a man! How he writes! so clear, one can see to the bottom; and so deep, it is sometimes beyond measure! Do you know his Nathan? Well, there are some words in it which I always repeat to myself when I feel my heart harden, and my milk of human kindness dry up:

'Well!

Let every one follow his unbiassed love,
Free from all prejudice!'

"I have meditated these twenty years on these words, and I have found that they state all a man can do and ought to do in his intercourse with other men, and even with other beings. If men would only understand and practise that lesson, we should need no police in the cities or in the country, no jails and no poor-houses; yes, my dear sir, then liberty would reign without holding a sword in one hand, while bestowing her benefits upon men with the other hand."

"But do you know, Mr. Hans, what Saladin says in answer to the philosopher's remark, with the practical shrewdness and the clear view of mankind which he has obtained on his lofty throne? 'The thousand years of your judge are not yet over.' Well, I also say, they are not passed yet even now!"

"Do you really think so?" inquired Balthasar, and his eyes rested anxious and searching on his companion's face. "Might we not begin to hope, now that they have proclaimed liberty, equality, and fraternity in France with the republic?—now that spring has come to us also, not only in woods, and

fields, and meadows, but even in the hearts of men?—now that fires are joyfully kindled on every height, and not a vessel drops down the Rhine that is not dressed in gay flags? Might we not hope now?”

“I fear not,” said Wolfgang. “I cannot imagine, for instance, that the old general up at the great house is very warm for liberty and equality.”

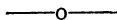
“Ah no!” said Balthasar, with a piteous face. “He is a terrible man.”

They had reached the end of the avenue, and were standing before the park wall, which was half decayed and covered with all kinds of creepers, where an iron gate hanging on a single hinge opened upon the fields.

Balthasar took off his cap, and said, in a low, imploring voice: “Pray do not tell anybody that you have met me here in the park. She was going to send me my meal down to the village, but I presume she has forgotten all about it. Well, it does not matter; old Ursula will give me something to eat. Don’t tell anybody, please. And now, good-by to you, sir! good-by, and God bless you!”

The odd man squeezed through the narrow little gate, looked round for a moment, repeating his “God bless you, sir!” and was gone.

“Well, this is a strange acquaintance that I have made,” said Wolfgang to himself as he went back to the château. “Really, there seems to be some need of God’s blessing in this enchanted castle.”



CHAPTER VI.

WOLFGANG found the general, who had sent for him half an hour before, seated in an arm-chair in the garden-room down stairs, reading his newspaper. He wanted the young man to tell him all about a professor in his university who had recently delivered a liberal speech at a popular meeting, which was only imperfectly reported in the papers. Wolfgang had been present at the meeting,

and after having completed the professor's speech as far as he recollected it, to please the old gentleman, he became almost unconsciously involved in a political discussion, which naturally soon assumed a very unpleasant turn for the young man. The old gentleman became quite angry and said, in his rude manner, sneeringly:

"You are a young man, and think it a great affair to erect a barricade here and there to smash a few windows and to drink and yell till you are hoarse. Pshaw! Even a lame horse kicks, if they put too heavy a load in the cart and whip him too unmercifully; but for all that he remains a lame horse and pulls his load patiently when he sees that his kicking is of no use. So it is with the people. There must be lame horses who plague themselves to death for us, and poor rabble who work for us till they die. It has been so since the world was made, and will be so till the end of the world. As long as there are people who like to drink champagne and to eat *pâtés de foie gras*, there will be no want of the poor, squinting, flatheaded men who feed on potatoes and drink mean whiskey. What can *you* do? Religion? Well, every age has had its good-natured creatures who are willing to burn their fingers in order to pull the chestnuts out of the fire for others; but your saints become sinners, and your hermits fat, jolly monks, and at last—the earth is round and has to turn and turn. Revolutions? *Mon cher*, I was just as green as you are, in spite of your handsome black moustache, when I was an ensign in the hussars in seventeen hundred and eighty-nine. I was a wild fellow, and as my captain was a strict disciplinarian, I thought great things of *liberté*, and especially of the goddess of reason in her scanty costume; drank a good many bowls of punch with my comrades at that time, and sang: *Allons enfants!* and kissed the pretty girls at the same time. But when they made me a captain, and I was heartily tired of pretty girls, I worried my ensigns exactly as I had been worried myself. *Egalité! Fraternité!* Don't let them cheat you! He who has the power, has the right; and if he gives up his power before he is forced to do so, he is an ass, that is all! Why on earth don't the monarchs do on a large scale as we did in miniature when we were on the march in seventeen hundred and ninety-two? I had a couple of impudent

fellows in my company, who wanted to teach the others something new. 'You'll learn manners, you blackguards,' I thought. Not long afterwards, the whole company turns to the right, at drill, when I command to the left; and to the left, when I command to the right! 'Halt! why don't you do as I say?' 'Because we won't!' cries the whole company. 'Ah!' say I, 'because you won't!' and call the leader to the front. He comes up, standing right before me. 'Why don't you do as I say?' 'Because I won't!' says the fellow, and laughs at me. 'Get off your horse!' I cry. The man don't stir. 'Get off!' I order him once more. The man grins and don't move. 'Well, then, go to the devil!' I cry, draw my pistol, which I had kept loaded in the holsters, and shoot the dog down on the spot. After that not a man went to the right again, when I ordered 'to the left!' Why didn't the fellows cut me down with the swords they held in their hands? No one prevented them; we were quite alone on the field, half an hour from the fortress; not a man to stand by me. Why didn't they do it? Because they were cowards; they had no pluck. And I tell you, my man, if they had had pluck these last days, the monarchs would not now be sitting on their thrones as I sit here in my arm-chair. Have you been in the army, boy?"

"I have served my year as volunteer."

"Where?"

"In Bonn."

"Hem! Hem!"

The general was silent, and puffed thick clouds of smoke from his short meerschaum pipe. Wolfgang looked at the old weather-beaten face, full of passion as it still was, and felt horror and wonder at once. He was ashamed that he had not the courage to contradict the old tyrant there, and yet his tongue was paralyzed; and when he saw the piercing black eyes beneath the bristly brows fixed upon his face, he felt somewhat like what the bird may feel when the snake is suddenly peering into the nest.

"Why did you not remain in the army?" suddenly began the old man again. "You are more fit for it than your spindle-shanked, red-headed cousins. The army is the only fit place for a nobleman."

"I beg to remind you that I am of noble descent only on

one side of the house," remarked Wolfgang, with a somewhat forced smile.

"Why? Because your mother was not well born? It is bad enough, to be sure, that your father should have degraded himself by marrying."

Wolfgang's face became flushed with indignation. "You seem to forget, general," he said in a firm voice, "that you are speaking of my mother."

"Eh?" said the general, frowning angrily and looking fiercely at the young man who dared to speak to him in such a tone. "Eh?"

But Wolfgang was not to be intimidated when the honor of his mother was at stake.

"I only wish to say," he continued, "that no man could be degraded by marrying my mother, and that I am proud of my mother—yes, general, very proud; and that I shall not remain a moment longer in a house where my mother can be thus spoken of, without my being able to prevent it."

Wolfgang had risen while saying these words, and stood now, trembling with excitement, but firm in look and carriage, before the general. He was prepared for an explosion of wrath, and therefore not a little astonished when the old gentleman broke out into a hoarse laugh, and said, laughing and coughing:

"Good blood, my boy! glad to see it! very glad! must not weigh every word the old man says. Your mother is a lady whom I like very much. You are right, you are perfectly right—and now go and call Bridget. Ah! this wretched cough!"

Wolfgang wanted to assist the old gentleman, but the latter motioned him away, and he went, glad to have escaped so well.

"The schoolmaster was right," he said to himself, when he had reached his room; "he is a terrible man, a real devil of a white-haired, lowering, raging old lion. But with all that, I do not think he is quite as bad as papa and the others represent him to be. I wonder if the old Isengrim could be tamed, and if it would be worth while?"

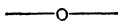
Wolfgang was standing at the open window, his arms crossed, and looking upon the neglected park, over which night was beginning to spread its dark shadows. He fell

into a flood of restless, ever-changing thoughts, until a servant came and announced that supper was ready.

The president's wife had returned, bringing out a small trunk for Wolfgang, which his mother had hastily filled with all he might need for a longer stay at Rheinfeld.

She was very gracious during supper, at which neither the general nor Bridget were present. She could not find words enough to tell Wolfgang how much she had been pleased with his mother, and how glad she was to have at last made the acquaintance of such a charming lady, whom she only regretted not to have known before.

Any one who praised his mother was sure to win favor with Wolfgang. He thought his aunt a very pleasing lady, and discovered that Camilla, who kept very quiet, and scarcely raised her silken eyelashes, was even prettier by candle-light than by day-light, so that he no longer regretted having yielded to the wishes of his parents and his granduncle's caprice. The enormous bed, doubly grand and stately now, with its heavy silk curtains let down, received the tired youth as it were with hospitable arms; a few rays of moonlight peeped stealthily through the window curtains, and produced a pleasant mellow light in the lofty silent room; and from the dim light two dreamy brown eyes looked at him so tenderly and yet so roguishly that Wolfgang could not help smiling, and he fell asleep with the smile on his lips.



CHAPTER VII.

AND with a smile on his lips Wolfgang awoke again next morning, and a watchful observer would have noticed that smile quite frequently on his lips during the day. He hardly knew himself what made him so cheerful; and with that instinct which enables precocious minds to judge early of the uncertainty of sunny hours, he carefully abstained from analyzing his feelings. And then, why should he not enjoy the loveliness of this glorious spring, lying so warm and fragrant on fields, and meadows, and

vineyards? Why should he not make good use of this opportunity to be happy in unfettered intercourse with a girl whose beauty he daily admired more? He had never yet in all his simple, sober life, had such happiness allotted him! He had never had sisters, nor friends with sisters, like other young men; and the charm of female society, which many enjoy at so early an age that they soon cease to appreciate it, began now, in his twentieth year, for the first time to be revealed to the young man. Was it a wonder, especially in this rural seclusion, that he fancied he heard the voices of sirens, when after all it was but the tongue of his own race that spoke to him. The president's wife was not fond of long walks, and, spoilt by want of exercise and the close air in the house, found it always either too cool or too hot, too windy or too close; thus Wolfgang and Camilla sauntered about in the park, alone, at all hours of the day. As the park in its neglected state looked even larger than it was, they made regular voyages of discovery in all directions; nor was there any want of pleasing adventures, which made them think often enough of Robinson Crusoe and his island. Once they fastened a few trunks of trees together with willow withes, and thus crossed a reedy pond, in order to reach a little decayed temple, which stood on an island in the centre; the boat by which the passage had formerly been made, was now lying deeply imbedded in the mire, and only the bow rose out of the reeds near the shore. Another time a thunder-storm overtook them, and they could but just reach a grotto, which became their delightful prison for an hour, while the rain came down in torrents, dazzling flashes of lightning illumined the darkness, and the quiet spaces under the gigantic old trees resounded with rolling thunder. Again, at the uttermost end of the park, concealed behind an almost impenetrable thicket, and tall, broad-branching lime-trees, they discovered a turret, which they ascended, laughing and jesting, by means of a much-decayed wooden staircase, in order to enjoy the superb view from the top. Surrounded on three sides by the green foliage of trees, which formed a waving bower over the turret, on the fourth side they could see over the top of the park enclosure, the stream up and down, and far into the rich plain. The sun had already disappeared behind the trees, but the reflection

of the glowing western sky still shone rosy on the majestic windings of the river ; and beyond, on meadows and fields with their tender green grains, the last rays of the evening sun were weaving their magic charms. Then the vesper bells were heard far and near from all the countless villages, and gradually the glowing brightness faded away on the grayish waters, soft blue mists veiled the brilliant landscape, field by field, and at last nothing was seen but a window of the lofty cathedral in the "holy city," which shone like a lighthouse above the sea of mists, till that also vanished, and evening spread its darker shades over the earth, and the golden stars came forth, one by one, on the deep-blue sky.

Such views, such scenes, had a magic influence on Wolfgang's mind, susceptible as it was to every kind of beauty ; and yet, after all, they formed but a frame and a background for the fair and graceful young girl with whom accident had brought him into such close and constant contact. It was Wolfgang's greatest happiness to confide where he could be understood ; and the zeal with which Camilla entered upon his favorite themes, the interest she manifested in his studies, his plans, and his hopes ; the gratitude with which she accepted his teachings—all this charmed him not less than the lovely play of her gentle eyes, the bashful blushes that mantled her cheeks, and the naïve lisp with which she acknowledged many a defect in her boarding-school education.

Wolfgang had hoped every day to meet the schoolmaster once more in the park, but in vain. The worn-out dress-coat and the yellow nankeen trousers were not to be seen any more. And yet the young man's sympathy for the strange saint had by no means abated. He had inquired of the servants about the schoolmaster, whom he said he had met by chance during one of his walks ; but carefully as his inquiries were made, the servants answered evasively, till at last one of them, who was more communicative than his comrades, condescended to give him the following account :

"Mr. Balthasar Hans—or Little Hans, as old and young called him—was altogether and hopelessly insane, and good for nothing in this world but to teach the boys of the village their A B C and their prayers, which did not require much sense. He never had a farthing, much less a larger coin, in his pocket, because he either gave away his money or spent

it on useless books, of which he was desperately fond. Madame was really his wife, but she was separated from him, and had lived now for twenty years at the great house, because his excellency could not well do without her, and she preferred, very naturally, not to keep house for a crazy man, who would have starved to death long since, if his modest meals were not sent him every day from the kitchen at the great house. Otherwise Little Hans was a very innocent creature, who did no one any harm, and who talked to any one who gave him a chance, in such a very funny way that one could not help laughing heartily. In the kitchen they always had their fun with him."

One evening, when Camilla had to stay with her mother, who had an attack of neuralgia, it occurred to Wolfgang that he could not spend the time better than by paying a visit to the schoolmaster. He went, therefore, for the first time in a week, alone on his way through the fields and the vineyards. He was in the best of humors. Yesterday's mail had brought him a letter from his mother, who wrote to him that she was uncommonly well, and that she owed this largely to the excellent spirits in which his father had returned from Rheinfeld. Papa sent word to Wolfgang to be as considerate as possible towards his old granduncle, and to do all he could to confirm the good understanding which had so suddenly been brought about between the two families, by his cautious but amicable conduct towards Camilla and her mother.

"That will not be difficult," the young man said to himself, smiling, and paused to look back at the château. Through the dense foliage only a part of the building could be seen—a portion of the frieze with its ornaments, and a few windows, which Wolfgang's excellent eyes recognized at once as belonging to the room in which Camilla was with her mother.

"Good-by, dear Wolfgang!" the young man repeated several times, and always in a different tone of voice.

"I can't hit it," he whispered, shaking his head. "She has too sweet and soft a voice!"

He continued on his way, surrounded by lovely creations of his fancy, and soon reached the little village.

Rheinfeld was a sad heap of one-storied, tumble-down

houses, miserable barns, and still more wretched stables, and little gardens in which nothing seemed to thrive but weeds ; the whole surrounded by a wall in ruins, which had been built in very ancient times, if we might judge from the appearance of the stones and the shape of a round old tower, which was ruinous and half demolished. A low, weatherbeaten house, one gable end of which was tacked on to the tower, was pointed out to Wolfgang, by a ragged, black-eyed boy, as the dwelling of the schoolmaster.

He went in, stooping low, and looked through the open door on the right into the spacious school-room. Here he found Mr. Hans. The good man had pulled off his black dress-coat and was wiping the benches and tables with a white towel so industriously that he did not see his visitor till the latter stood right before him.

"Ah ! see there ! the young gentleman !" exclaimed Balthasar, raising his soft blue eyes in surprise.

"I hope I do not interrupt, Mr. Hans ?" asked Wolfgang.

"Oh, not in the least, not in the least," replied the schoolmaster. "I have just done, just done !" and with these words he glanced all around, as if he wished to see that he had really done.

"You seem to be bent upon having everything tidy, Mr. Hans." *

"Ought I not to be so ?" replied Balthasar. "Is it not bad enough that the poor little creatures must be shut up here within the narrow walls when they feel the beautiful spring air outside in all their limbs ? That is why I try to save them at least the suffering from dust and dirt."

Balthasar took his broom and his other things and invited Wolfgang by a gesture of his hand to follow him across the passage into the opposite room.

This was a small low room with two windows ; a common table, a couple of unsafe settles, a low narrow bed half-concealed by a little curtain of flowered chintz, and a worm-eaten cupboard, containing copy-books, a violin, and a few well-thumbed books, made up the whole furniture. On the white-washed walls hung a few poor wood-cuts and a crucifix carved in dark wood, the fine antique workmanship of which at once attracted Wolfgang's attention.

"Ah, you see that ?" said Balthasar, who had in the mean-

time put on his long-tailed dress-coat. "That is a fine piece of workmanship. The general once threw that at my head!"

"What!" exclaimed Wolfgang, quite astonished.

"You must not take it amiss, my dear sir," replied Balthasar with a smile of embarrassment. "I have heard you are his excellency's grandnephew, and therefore I ought not to have told you; but since it has slipped out in this way, I hope you will pardon me."

"Oh, no harm done!" said Wolfgang, kindly. "I know the general is rather a passionate old gentleman, but how did it happen that he forgot himself so far?"

"Ah, that was a long time ago," said Balthasar. "I used to go frequently to the great house then, and to play chess with his excellency, who suffered with the gout, in order to see her——"

Here Balthasar blushed and coughed to hide his embarrassment.

"I mean, to see my wife, who was nursing the general in his sickness. You must know, sir, that my wife was his excellency's housekeeper before we were married, and thus it was quite natural that his excellency wanted her to nurse him, as she understood it better than anybody else."

"Of course, of course!" said Wolfgang, anxious to help Balthasar in disposing of a subject which seemed painful to the poor man.

"Don't you think so?" said the latter, relieved. "So I was frequently at the great house and really felt very sorry for the old gentleman, who suffered terrible pain. He employed me from time to time to right up the armory; and there, amid old rubbish, I had found this beautiful image of our Saviour. I thought I would hang it up in his excellency's room, so that he might take an example of patient endurance from Him who suffered more than any man upon earth. But his excellency would not have it so; on the contrary, he became very angry when he found it in his room, threw it at my head and cried: 'Go to the devil with your stuff!' I did not wait for more, rose—for I had been struck down, although I was not hurt much, God be thanked!—took the poor, ill-used crucifix and carried it home, as his excellency had, after a fashion, given it to me."

"It is really a very fine work of art," said Wolfgang;

"full of character and yet not a caricature. I must admire it, although I am generally not very fond of such representations."

"Why not, my dear sir?" asked the schoolmaster.

"Because I cannot help thinking of the horrors that have been enacted under this symbol, and of the idol worship to which it has led—but we shall hardly agree on this point. You must know, Mr. Hans, I am not a Catholic."

"Oh," said Balthasar, eagerly; "that makes no difference, in my opinion. I do not judge men according to their religion. But I cannot help thinking the image of the crucified must be dear to every one, in spite of the abuse it has received among men. To be sure it would be better——"

Balthasar paused and looked full in his visitor's face.

"What would be better, Mr. Hans?"

"I ought not to say so, for it is arrant heresy, and I know people who would stone me if they heard me say so. But you have such dear, good, bright eyes, I think I can trust you."

"That you may, most assuredly!" said Wolfgang, offering his hand to the schoolmaster, who pressed it heartily. "What were you going to say?"

Balthasar let go Wolfgang's hand, closed the windows, the house door, and the school-room windows, came back and said with a certain solemnity:

"I am going to tell you something, my dear sir, that I have told no one yet; and to show you how great my confidence in you is, I will show you a place which nobody knows but I. Will you please follow me?"

"Certainly," said Wolfgang, not a little surprised at the schoolmaster's extraordinary manner.

The latter opened a small side door and beckoned to Wolfgang to follow him.

They entered a dimly-lighted room, paved with brick, and apparently intended for a kitchen, as there was an abandoned hearth in it. A work-bench, a few carpenter's tools, planks and piles of saw-dust and shavings were all that were to be seen. From this room a rotten staircase led through a trap door in the ceiling into the garret, which had no other light than what entered here and there through the crevices in the roof.

"Give me your hand," said Balthasar. "There is a good deal of lumber lying about, which has accumulated here under my predecessors, and to which I have added on purpose. Well! Now wait a moment, till I have struck a light."

Balthasar lighted a lantern, which he had found somewhere in a corner, and held it against the wall before which they were standing.

"Can you see any door here?" he asked, letting the light of the lantern fall all over the wall.

"No," replied Wolfgang.

"And yet there is a door!" said Balthasar, with a well-pleased laugh and blowing out the light. "It cost me work enough before I succeeded with the mechanism. Now look!"

He pressed against the wall; a low door moved noiselessly aside; a dark, narrow passage became visible, and beyond a lighter room.

"Go on," said Balthasar, "you need not fear, only bend down a little, or you might hurt your head. I must lock the door again behind you.

Wolfgang entered the passage, which was about ten feet long, and so narrow that he almost touched the rough stone sides with his shoulders, and thus came to a round and rather lofty apartment, which was tolerably well lighted by small openings in the immensely thick walls. Under one of these openings stood a large table, and before the table an old wooden arm-chair. The table was covered with books, minerals, dried plants, phials, and glasses; along the walls were cupboards filled with all kinds of curious things, and even the floor was littered with strange odds and ends.

Wolfgang looked around the room with surprise. It reminded him of old legends of magicians and sorcerers: thus must have looked the musty den which Faust wished to exchange for the moonlit mountains without.

"Here we are safe," said Balthasar, urging his guest to take the arm-chair, and seating himself on a couple of huge folios. "The people think the tower is inaccessible, and there is really no entrance except the little door in the garret of my house, which I myself broke through the thick wall and carefully hid again, as you saw."

"But what made you think of it?"

"First, idle curiosity: I wanted to see what was in the decayed old tower, which the people call the Witches' Tower, and look upon with superstitious awe; and then, when I was once in it, the wish to find a place of refuge, where I could be safe from intrusion when I wished to be alone. Then I also brought the books here which I had bought with my hard-earned money at auction and at book-stalls, together with my minerals and my plants, without fear of being anathematized by the priest, and perhaps murdered by the superstitious peasants. For you know, my dear sir, we read in plants and stones much that a poor schoolmaster is not expected to know?"

"And so you escape from fools and priests to this asylum! Well, well, I can understand now why you, like the convent brother in Lessing's *Nathan*, must wish for a little place of your own, where you can serve the Almighty in solitude till your blessed end."

Balthasar looked up at Wolfgang as he said these words, and examined him in silence for a few moments. Then he said—and his gentle voice sounded even gentler and more childlike than before:

"You see, my dear sir, that is exactly what I wanted to say to you, and what I have long desired to tell some one, to whom I could feel perfect confidence. I cannot believe in God and a so-called blessed end, as these people around me believe."

"That is pretty bad, I am sure, especially in your position here," replied Wolfgang. "But, setting that aside, you do not stand alone in your convictions. I myself, for instance, am strongly inclined to take your view of the matter; and my best friend, a man of great ability and thoroughly well educated, is as positively opposed to all dogmas as you are."

"Ah, indeed!" said Balthasar. "I always thought there must be other people, besides myself, who held these views; but as I had never been able to speak to anybody about it, and as I found it clearly stated in no book, I became doubtful again. But you say, really——"

The schoolmaster had risen from his folios, and was walking up and down the room with hurried steps. Suddenly he

paused before Wolfgang, and asked him, with an emotion which was evidently very unusual in him :

“ But if that is really so, if there are learned and gifted men who do not believe in the dogmas of the church, why do they not speak out boldly and frankly? Why do they remain hypocrites, and compel others, who are not learned and gifted, and whose voice nobody listens to on that account, to become hypocrites likewise? ”

Wolfgang shrugged his shoulders.

“ I have often asked myself that question,” he said, “ and found only this answer: Some are silent from indifference, others from want of courage ; some, because they do not think the time has come yet for a reign of pure reason ; and still others, because they think that time will never come, and that men, like children, must always be kept in leading strings, and that it is, therefore, not right to disturb them in the simple faith that makes them happy.”

The schoolmaster had resumed his seat on the folios, and rubbed his forehead in deep thought.

“ That is plausible,” he said ; “ nevertheless it is always a painful thing not to be able to speak as one feels. It has given me many a sad hour ; it has driven me nearly to insanity. And then, would it not be better for us all, even for children, if they were taught nothing but the one simple truth, that we poor weak mortals must look to each other alone for help, and that such assistance can only come to us through love? Would not the poor and the unhappy be much better off ; nay, would there be any poor and unhappy people if it were preached openly and boldly, in the streets and in public places, that not to love your neighbor is a sin, a sin against humanity—humanity which is outraged and disgraced in every hungry one whom we do not feed, in every thirsty one whom we do not give to drink, and every naked one whom we do not clothe. And do not tell me that this is out of your power !—do not say such self-denial, such love, is beyond the power of man ! Do you not know that the Son of Man has so loved his brethren as to die on the cross for them? Bear in mind that he was a man like yourself when he did so and suffered so, and that you can do and suffer like him, if you have but the will ! ”

Balthasar had risen in the excitement of his speech. A

red ray of the evening sun entered the sombre room and fell upon his pale face. Wolfgang looked at him with wonder and reverence. This man, whose eyes shone with a sacred fire, whose voice sounded full, like the ringing of bells from the high vaulted ceiling, was no longer the poor, humble schoolmaster, embarrassed and awkward as he was among men—he looked a saint, a priest of a religion which knows no other priests than such as are filled with the holy spirit of active humanity. . . .

But Wolfgang, young as he was, had already been too much in the world to see in this man's harmless readiness to sacrifice himself anything but a rare exception to the general rule, and in the world of which he was dreaming, more than a Utopia, which as yet could be found nowhere except in the hearts of a few noble enthusiasts. But he did not wish to afflict the good man by his doubts, and only said :

“Men will reach that promised land ; not we, nor the next generation, nor who knows how many generations to come, who must all perish first in the desert ! But it *will* be reached. Let us believe in that, and comfort ourselves with that hope amid the heat and the dust of the road—that is all we can do.”

Balthasar had resumed his seat, leaning his head on his hand. The momentary excitement had given way to weariness. He was silent, and Wolfgang said nothing.

Thus they sat opposite each other, each absorbed in his own thoughts, while the red ray, peeping in through a crevice in the wall, rose higher and higher, and at last disappeared, leaving the room in complete darkness.

“That is all we can do,” said Balthasar at last. He pushed his hair from his brow and eyes, like one who awakes from a deep sleep, and looked at Wolfgang.

“It is quite dark now,” he said with his usual low voice ; “the sun has disappeared behind the château ; they will miss you if you stay much longer.”

They went back the same way they had come. At the door Balthasar said : “If you like, I will show you a much shorter way to the park gate, through which I go in and out.”

They went from the schoolmaster's house almost directly through a breach in the old wall of the village, and found a

small path which followed a canal, lined with old chestnut-trees, until they came to the little gate in the park enclosure. Here Balthasar was about to leave Wolfgang. The latter asked him if he would be in the park again the next day. Hans said No! He had to attend a teachers' meeting at some distance. The schoolmasters were there to be told whom to vote for at the approaching elections for the assembly in Berlin and in Frankfurth.

"Well then, perhaps day after to-morrow," said Wolfgang. "I do not know how long I shall stay here; at all events I should not like to leave without having seen you once more. And one other thing: If I should not see you again, you must not forget that I am your friend, and shall be delighted to do anything for you that is in my power. Do not forget that!"

He offered his hand to Balthasar, who took it and held it for some time.

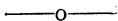
"I shall not forget you," he said. "What only happens to us once in our lives, we are not apt to forget soon; and you are the only man to whom I have ever spoken freely about what is nearest to my heart. But please do not you forget me! It may sound foolish and presumptuous, but I must tell you that, as we were walking along the canal, it came into my head that one of these days you would come that same way to seek refuge with me. But I often have such curious ideas, that seem to be most improbable, so that quite frequently I think of myself what people say: I am not quite right up here!"

He touched his forehead and smiled sadly at Wolfgang.

"You are too much alone, Mr. Hans," said Wolfgang. "Solitude is an inspiring but also an intoxicating beverage. Why has Fate not given you a companion for life, as gentle and as good as you are?"

"My dear sir," said Balthasar, "I have always found that Fate is nothing but our own self with its foibles and its virtues. I have to suffer long for a short folly. I hope, with all my heart, your cleverness may preserve you from a like fate. But I need not say so. You are good and clever, and I am half a fool and half a coward—a bird with one broken wing, so that the other only serves to make him turn round and round in a circle. Good-by! Good-by!"

The gentle eyes of the poor man filled with tears ; he pressed Wolfgang's hand to his heart, turned round, pulled his cap with the broken visor far down over his face, and hurried back to the village along the canal with the chestnut-trees, never looking round again.



CHAPTER VIII.

WOLFGANG followed him long with his eyes, feeling both admiration and pity for the poor man. Is there no happy medium between Alexander and Diogenes? Must we be anvil when we are not strong enough to be hammer?

He entered the park and sauntered listlessly about amid the hedges and bushes on familiar paths. The hour for supper had not yet come ; and as he knew that he would have to sit alone in the deserted dining-room, he was not in a hurry to return to the house. Besides, the evening was glorious. In the thick copses the nightingales were singing incessantly ; the parterres of flowers exhaled fragrant perfumes which filled the cool, balsamic air ; a broad, saffron-colored band lay on the western horizon, and golden-veined clouds floated here and there through the light green ether, while the lofty aisles under the ancient trees were already wrapped in darkness.

And gradually the darkness increased and spread in all directions ; a single golden star glittered high on the dim sky above the masses of almost black evergreens.

Wolfgang's eyes were charmed by this star, whose light seemed to shine down into his heart. The emotion which the schoolmaster's words had caused him, still vibrated in his soul, but in wider and wider waves, like the great rings which the falling of an apple causes on the smooth mirror of a silent garden lake at night. Thoughts of love filled his heart, but not the love of a dreaming philanthropist, but the strong love of youth, which sees a whole world in two fair brown eyes. " Why should I not worship in that one star,

the whole starry sky? Its twinkling light lifts me higher above earthly cares than the sight of myriads of sparkling constellations! No, I will not forsake man because of my interest in mankind, nor dream away the present for the sake of the future. I will love man, but I will begin with the individual; and above all, with you, sweetest of maidens, whose eyes shine with sacred fire like yonder star, whose voice is as sweet as the nightingale's song, whose loving ways charm me, like the balsamic, fragrant air I breathe . . ."

The young man fell into a blissful, dithyrambic state of mind, such as he had never known before. He laid aside, like a hateful convent garb, the thoughtful, sombre gravity which early and painful experience of life, the narrowness of his surroundings, and the severe demands of his studies, had prematurely given him. He felt as if he were just beginning to live; as if he were for the first time conscious of his youth and his vigor; as if the image of painful self-sacrifice which the melancholy saint had shown him in his solitary tower, had awakened more powerfully in him a youthful desire for happiness, for love, for a full and hearty enjoyment of his existence.

He threw himself upon a grassy bank overhung by a lilac bush with its rich fragrant clusters of flowers. His head was in a glow; he buried his burning face in both hands.

A slight rustling, as of a silk dress, quite near him, roused him from his ecstasy. He raised his head, and before him stood, surrounded by the mild evening light, Camilla. With a cry of joyful surprise he started up. One glance at the clear brown eyes full of fire—he opened his arms, Camilla hung on his bosom, and the young, love-thirsty lips drank bliss in one long, tender kiss.

"Camilla, sweet one, darling, do you love me as I love you?"

Camilla's answer was a second kiss, warmer, more conscious than the first, given and taken by surprise. Her whole being seemed to well over in overwhelming rapture. It seemed as if kisses were the only language in which the soul of the girl could make itself understood. She had no other reply to all of Wolfgang's tender words.

He put his arm around her slender waist, and thus they sauntered slowly through the darkening avenues by the light

of the stars, which came out one by one on the blue sky, and the song of the nightingales which floated in softer and fuller tones. A feeling of happiness, such as Wolfgang never had dreamt of in his hours of warmest longing, filled his heart, and overflowed in words of sweetest flattery, in a thousand ardent vows, and in rich and brilliant fancies such as can only arise in the mind of a clever and ingenuous youth, whose noble heart is full of love. "You know, darling, I see in my happiness, as in a chaste mirror, the happiness of mankind. I believe in the omnipotence of love to make all men happy, now that it has performed such a miracle in me. I see before me, in brilliant clearness, the aim which has been dimly in my mind ever since I was a boy. I wished to do something for the great work of setting free the nations of the earth. But the individual can do nothing more than set himself free—free from all the coarseness that adheres to us—and that can be done only by love. My love for you makes me fancy myself as fair and holy as you are. In my love for you, and in your love for me, in our mutual love, I shall have a talisman which will carry me unharmed through all the troubles of earthly life. And others also will be benefited by this love; the hallowing power of love will affect all who are near us. And even if it were not so—if our love should perish with us as the perfume of a flower dies with the flower—we shall not have lived in vain, for we have been happy, unspeakably happy, have we not, darling?"

And again a tender kiss was the only answer Camilla had for all of Wolfgang's burning words. And he cared for no other answer! He thought it so sweet to find in a chaste, pure maiden's heart the crystal cup, into which he could pour all the pearls and diamonds, all that was most precious in his thoughts and feelings; he thought it so beautiful to awaken this silent Psyche to life by his kisses!

She had come close to him, and he laid his burning cheek on her hair, damp with the evening dew. Suddenly she started:

"Listen, what was that?"

"Nothing, darling, but the beating of my heart."

"No, no, somebody called—called your name; we must not be found together."

She slipped out of Wolfgang's arms, hastened up a few

steps which led to a terrace near one of the wings of the château, and instantly disappeared behind the close hedges and thick bosquets.

Wolfgang felt, as he suddenly stood alone in the dark garden, like a man who has been aroused from an enchanting dream to face a very unpleasant reality. The abrupt manner in which Camilla had torn herself from him made him feel as if a false note had broken in upon the wonderful harmony of his love hymn ; but he had not time to let the roughly-touched chord vibrate till it rested again. The voice, which he had not heard before, now sounded close by him. It was madame who angrily called his name, and between the calls scolded at her visitors, who left her no peace by day and by night. Wolfgang began to fear that some mishap had occurred. "Here!" he cried, walking towards the house-keeper. "Here I am! what is the matter?"

"Ah, here you are at last!" replied madame. "This is the third time the general has sent me out. It will give me a cold, and rheumatism in the bargain, this damp, cold garden. But what is an old woman to you all? If the young ladies and gentlemen can only amuse themselves well, everybody else in the house may die at his leisure!"

"My dear madame, I am sincerely sorry to have given you so much trouble ; but tell me, for heaven's sake, what is the matter? Is granduncle sick?"

"Oh, the general is perfectly well ; but at your home all is not quite as well."

"Is my mother sick?—is she dead?" cried Wolfgang, seizing madame violently by the arm.

"How do I know?" replied the latter, angrily. "You would better ask the man with the carriage, who has been waiting for more than two hours in the yard."

Wolfgang rushed out of the garden, without deigning to say a word to the woman. Madame looked after him with a sneering laugh. "He is gone," she said, "and the others shall follow, I warrant that."

When Wolfgang came into the court-yard, he found old Moss, who was feeding the horses with bread ; he had not taken them out. Old Moss was a livery-man, who kept his stable near the house of Wolfgang's parents, and the young man had known him and liked him from early childhood.

Old Moss had often taken the boy into the stable while he cleaned his horses, whistling at the same time most beautiful melodies. That was Moss's manner of talking. He did not like to speak, and even now Wolfgang could not learn much from him. He said the alderman's wife was sick ; but matters could not be very bad, because he had first driven the alderman to a meeting of the Town Council before coming out. It was probably all in the letter.

"What letter?"

Moss pointed with his bread-knife at the château.

"To the general?"

Moss nodded.

Wolfgang hastened back to the house and went straight to his granduncle's room. A lamp with a green shade was standing on the table, at which the general used to sit in the evening reading ; but the old gentleman was not in his arm-chair ; he was limping about in the room, as he was in the habit of doing when he was angry or otherwise excited. As Wolfgang entered hastily, he turned round with much promptness, and holding out to him a letter which he had drawn from a pocket in his dressing-gown, he said :

"There, you can read it yourself. I suppose it is not so bad, after all. They always make much ado about nothing."

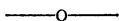
The letter, which Wolfgang took with a trembling hand, was addressed to the general, and consisted only of a few lines, in which his father wrote that his mother had been suddenly attacked last night by her old headache, and that in her wanderings she repeatedly asked for Wolfgang. The father did not seem to think that the attack was serious, but he desired Wolfgang to come home, merely to quiet his mother, if his granduncle did not object.

"I would have liked to keep you here," said the general, as Wolfgang looked at him after reading the letter. "You are a different man from those unlucky creatures, your cousins ; but it is better you should return to your work. I mean to do something for you, my boy ; it won't do you any harm if you listen to me. Now, make haste and get away, and write to me how your mother is."

There was a suspicion of feeling in the tone in which the general spoke, which Wolfgang would never have suspected in the obstinate, grim old man, and which touched

him doubly at this moment, when his mind was moved by so many and so varied impressions. He pressed his uncle's bony hand cordially, and left the room, after stammering a few incoherent words of gratitude.

A few minutes later he was in the carriage. Old Moss clicked his tongue, and the vehicle rattled across the uneven corduroy road of the court-yard. In the room occupied by the president's wife a light was burning. As the horses started, the curtain moved, and a girl's head appeared for a moment behind the panes, but Wolfgang did not look up. On the night sky, which rose like a brazen vault above him, there glittered countless stars, but Wolfgang had no eye now for all their splendor. He only thought of his sick mother, of the danger which threatened her whom he loved so devotedly.



CHAPTER IX.

CAMILLA had hardly rejoined her mother, when Lili, the maid, brought Baron Hohenstein's regards and his regrets at being unable to say good-by in person, as he was compelled to leave very suddenly. Why he had to leave was very well known to the president's wife and to Camilla, and had been so for the last two hours, during which the carriage which was to take Wolfgang to town had been waiting under their windows. The effect which Wolfgang's departure might have on the situation generally, and especially on the general, had been the subject of conversation between mother and daughter for a long time. The result was, that Camilla put her shawl over her beautiful shoulders and went down into the shady garden to help look for her cousin. "He will thank you very much for this expression of your sympathy," said the mamma; "and as circumstances are, it is perhaps safer to go a little too far in our kindness to him than to appear wanting." The good lady had actually left her bed in order to be able to bid farewell to her nephew, and to show him her deep sympathy. The message brought by the maid was, therefore, by no means welcome.

She was all the more curious now to hear her daughter's report, especially as the mother's eye had not failed to perceive a certain excitement in Camilla's face and manner when she entered. The maid had no sooner left the room again, than the president's wife said to the young lady, as she laid aside her shawl and came to sit by her on the sofa :

"Well, did you see him?—what did he say?—was he much overcome?—was he very grateful?"

"I did not say a word about his mother's sickness to him," replied Camilla.

"No? What then did you say? How could you avoid the unpleasant subject?"

"He did not give me time to speak. He——"

"Well?" asked her mother, quite excited, as Camilla paused with a kind of embarrassment.

"I found him sitting on a bench—near the little chestnut coppice, you know, mamma, when you go up the terrace. He held his head in his hand, and I thought he was asleep. I thought my steps would wake him up, and walked up to him. Then, as I was close before him, he rose, and—in a word, mamma, he declared he loved me."

"That is very well," said the mamma. "I hope you answered him properly, and allowed him no kind of familiarity?"

"Why, mamma!" cried Camilla, raising her fair head, as if filled with indignation.

"Well, well, child," said the old lady, taking the hands of her favorite child and caressing them tenderly; "under other circumstances that might not have been so very much amiss; nothing binds a lover more firmly than a kiss. They think, unless they are perfectly *blasé*, that it puts them under obligation, and I should not advise you, therefore, to play the prude with a lover whom you mean to marry. But you are right, we are not quite so far as that yet with Wolfgang. He is just now high in favor with your granduncle; only last night the general said pretty clearly that Wolfgang had so far the best prospect to inherit the bulk of his property. But then who can rely on the general?—to-day one way, and to-morrow another way, just as his humor may be, and as he has been treated by madame. He is a terrible old man, and I make an enormous sacrifice for your sake,

my dear child, by staying so long in this abominable house, where ennui stares at you in every room. But, as I was going to say, what did you tell him in reply?"

"I told him," said Camilla, very decidedly, "that his declaration surprised me so much that I hardly knew what to say to it; that I was fond of him, and felt an almost sisterly affection for him——"

"You dear, dear child!" exclaimed the mother, drawing the clever young lady towards her, and kissing her on her forehead.

"But that I could say neither yes nor no, and begged him to give me time for reflection."

"Well, very well indeed! You said nothing about me?"

"I thought it would be better to leave you for the present entirely out of the question. I thought it might embarrass you to have to decide before the other question is settled."

"You dear, dear child!" cried the lady once more in her exuberant, maternal pride, "you have acted just as I wished you to act. There must be no public declaration now, I pray you, child, for your granduncle may still change his mind! Well, I suppose we could manage to break it off; but still, it would be very disagreeable. It is much better so. You remain perfectly free with your other admirers, and Willamowsky will be a very good match when his stingy old father dies, which you know must happen sooner or later. There goes the carriage. Show yourself at the window—that can do no harm! Alas! dear child, I wish we could get out of this provisional state, as your father calls it. These efforts to succeed are terrible. I am sure, the days I have spent in this abominable house will cost me as many years of my life. I wonder how you bear the infliction so well. Half an hour's conversation with the terrible old man or with his hateful housekeeper irritates my nerves to an intolerable degree. I wish I were away, and I am sure I shall not be able to endure it much longer."

The good lady was on the point of sinking back into her corner of the sofa, exhausted by her long speech, when the maid appeared once more, saying: "His excellency wishes to see the young lady at once." This message at so late an hour surprised the ladies very much, and they felt by no means reassured when Lili, availing herself of the evident

embarrassment of her mistress, added : " There is something going on down stairs, I am sure ; for his excellency has been quarrelling with his housekeeper in her own room, and it was awful to hear. I am half frightened out of my wits."

" What can it mean ?" asked the president's wife, anxiously, when Lili had left them at her order.

" We'll soon see," said Camilla, boldly ; and though her heart beat violently, she left the room with an apparently calm and collected manner.

A few minutes later she returned.

" Well, what was it ?" asked her mother.

" Granduncle sends you his kindest regards, and wishes to know when you propose returning to town ?"

" It cannot be."

" His own words !"

" Oh, then it has all been in vain !" said the lady, piteously ; " my poor, poor child !"

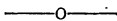
" I hope matters are not quite so bad," replied Camilla, contracting her brows in deep thought. " Granduncle was, notwithstanding, very gracious, and said at last in a whisper, probably in order that madame might not hear it through the key-hole, where she was no doubt listening, that he meant very well by myself and Wolfgang, and asked me if I would like to marry Wolfgang, if he should make us his heirs ?"

The happy mother clapped her fat hands in joyful surprise, and said :

" Then you will have to engage yourself, after all, and as soon as possible."

" I suppose that will be the best," said the wise young lady.

" My darling child ! my jewel of a daughter !" exclaimed the affectionate mother, and embraced, in deep emotion, her obedient child.



CHAPTER X.

IN one of the long narrow streets of the old and venerable city on the Rhine, which run parallel with the banks of the river from the steamboat wharf to the neighborhood of the great cathedral, there stood in the year

eighteen hundred and forty-eight (and perhaps there is still standing) a house which looks somewhat different from the small and rather shabby houses around it. Not that the house was particularly large and fine—far from it! It might have looked quite stately when it was just finished; and the honest burgess who owned it, and the architect who built it, might both have enjoyed it heartily. But now the days of its fresh youth were long since gone, and the two or three hundred years during which it had been exposed to wind and weather had left very legible traces behind them. The different stories, each one of which overhung the one beneath it—and there were three of them besides the pointed gable end—had given way, here to one side, and there to another, so that all the windows squinted more or less; the carvings on the heads of the beams had become effaced and could hardly be recognized; the same fate had befallen the stonehewn escutcheon over the enormous oaken door, which was always standing open, and gave free access to a very roomy hall, with a gallery running all around it, from which doors led to the inner rooms. In a word: the house, whatever it might have been heretofore, was now only what people call a “remarkable old box.” Nevertheless its present owner, Peter Schmitz, who had a printing office, and published a daily paper, was very proud of it, and would not have exchanged it for a palace, perhaps, because it had been so long in possession of his family, that his sister Bella, in her weaker moments, actually imagined the mutilated coat-of-arms over the front-door to be their own. That was not so. The family Schmitz was by no means noble. Peter Schmitz himself had no fondness for the nobility; and when his sister spoke of their coat-of-arms, was wont laughingly to call her an old fool. In fact, the family had no reason whatever for being proud. For generations they had been extremely poor; and though Peter Schmitz had succeeded by his energy and intelligence in making the old printing press in the rear still do some good work, he also recollected very well that not so very long ago it was perfectly silent, and the whole existence of the family depended on the prosperity of a little shop which provided the neighborhood with paper, pens, sealing wax, and an ink prepared according to a secret prescription by old Anthon Schmitz.

Peter Schmitz even maintained that since he had been compelled as a boy to help his father in the manufacture of this ink, his hands had never become white again. He loved to speak of that whole period as a blot in the history of the Schmitz family, which all the water of the river that had since rushed by could never wash out again.

When little Peter Schmitz, with his broad shoulders and his sanguine temperament, came to talk of this subject—which happened but rarely—he was apt to lose his usual animation. He would even become melancholy for a few minutes—but only for a few minutes, for Peter Schmitz had little time for such unprofitable vagaries. He would, in such cases, pass his hand through his stiff hair, which was fast turning gray, although he was but little over forty years old, and whistling three or four bars of a popular air, resume his work.

The blot in the history of the Schmitz family was of this nature :

When old Anthon Schmitz, some thirty years ago, gave up his press for want of patronage and capital, he hung out over the window to the left of the front-door, where now "Office of the People's Journal" was to be read in gilt letters, a small sign with the words: "Variety Store, by Anthon Schmitz." At that time the poor man was no longer in a position to provide for his children's education, much as he wished to do so. Eugene, then sixteen years old, had to leave the second class of the gymnasium and go to Thuringia to a machine shop ; and Bella, who was two years older, went to a farmer in the country, where she was to learn house-keeping. The two younger children, Peter and Margaret, stayed at home, but only in order to make themselves as useful as they could in the new business. Peter assisted his father in the manufacture of ink in the rear building, where the printing press was still standing ; and Margaret, then twelve years old, remained in the shop to help her mother. Those were hard years, those years of ink manufacture. The neighborhood seemed to have given up letter writing, to the special injury of the Schmitz family ; the mother was sickly, and died soon after ; the children who had been sent abroad were unlucky. Eugene, who had to serve his year in the army, could not learn to bend his lively temper under

the strict army regulations, found life in a little fortress unendurable, insulted his lieutenant, and was condemned to several years' imprisonment in a citadel. Bella, a pretty, clever girl, fared worse and worse in various families, where she tried her fortune, and degenerated sadly. Old Anthon Schmitz, one of those men who can bear neither good nor evil fortune, became as bitter by all these mishaps as the gall-nuts which he used in making ink; and poor Peter, in his miniature distillery, and Margaret in the dingy shop, led a joyless life in the dismal, decaying house, to which no lodger had come now for many a year. And yet the old man sincerely wished to secure the welfare of all his children, and especially that of Margaret, who had always been his favorite. It would have been difficult indeed for any one not to love Margaret, for she was a wonderfully lovely little thing. Dark-eyed and dark-haired like all the Schmitzes, with a slender figure, and a delicate, aristocratic face, looking still more refined by reason of its slightly melancholy expression, she might at eighteen have served a painter or a sculptor as a model for a Psyche or a Muse. All who came near her felt the charm that surrounded her person; the whole neighborhood was proud of her, and called her simply Fair Margaret! But nobody was prouder of her, and nobody thought her more beautiful, than her brother Peter. She was to him poetry itself: she was his comfort, his consolation in all the sufferings which his passionate heart had to endure. A smile from her, a kindly "Poor, dear Peter!" from her lips, were ample reward for all his hard, joyless labor, and for the peevish humor of his father. The hope to raise her one of these days from her lowly sphere to wealth and splendor was the dream of his young years—the light in the lighthouse, that gave him strength to bear the rough storms of life. And the broad shoulders of the young man, with his dark bright eyes under his bushy eye-brows, and his firm, straight brow under the full, black hair, were not put in vain to the wheels of Fortune's car. His clear mind discovered at last that the awkward manner in which his father carried on the business was the principal impediment in the way of success. He proposed a new plan, which the surly father had to approve against his will. For he saw that to make ink was at best

not a very profitable enterprise, and that a better method of manipulating rags might produce a better and cheaper kind of paper. In a cold room, and by the feeble light of miserable tallow candles, Peter studied chemistry, physics, and mechanics, and ere long he had discovered a new method, which the government appreciated to such a degree that it granted him a patent for ten years. Now all that was necessary was the capital required to carry out the plans which had cost him so many busy days and sleepless nights. The capital was soon found. The old, broken-down father had not been able to obtain the loan of a dollar; the young man with the small bright eyes and the firmly-closed lips, which yet would open at the right time and speak most persuasively, had no difficulty in obtaining thousands. The old man could not endure the rising of a new star over his decaying house. It distressed him that the ardently-desired end should be attained by other means than those he had thought best. From the day on which the new machinery was put up in the rear building, he never again appeared in the work-rooms. He locked himself up in his chamber, grumbling about eggs that meant to be wiser than the hens that had laid them, and about trees that proposed to grow up into the heavens. At last he fell sick; he talked much of dry grass, that ought to be gathered and thrown in the oven; and before long he died, although the physicians were not exactly able to say what disease carried him off. Peter said afterwards quite seriously: "of the new machinery." At that time, however, he had no leisure to meditate much on the causes of the old man's death, although he had always sincerely loved and honored him; for the fitting up and the working of his new factory required all his attention. The iron was on the anvil, and Peter Schmitz was the man to strike it while it was hot. Now at last he saw a possibility of doing something for his family, for his poor brother Eugene—who after having suffered five years' imprisonment for a wrong which would have been amply expiated in five days, had just been pardoned on the occurrence of a happy family event in the reigning house—for his sister Bella, before she lost all her freshness and health in her sad surroundings; and above all, for his youngest, his best beloved sister Margaret. But, strange enough, the brighter the world looked to Peter,

the happier his face looked with hope and active exertion, the more visibly the roses on fair Margaret's cheeks were fading away, and the more strongly marked became the melancholy expression in her charming face.

For some time Peter Schmitz did not know how to explain the state in which his sister was, and which made him very sad. At first he thought it was her grief for her father, but then it occurred to him that she had shown the same sadness even before his death. Then he fancied it might be her loneliness in the mournful house, and he proposed to her to send for their sister Bella ; but, strange enough, Margaret would not hear of it. She said that Bella was very well off in her present situation, and she herself wished nothing better than to be alone, quite alone ; and as she said these words, her beautiful eyes filled with tears. Peter tried to guess the cause, but he never discovered it—probably because it lay too far apart from the path which he was pursuing with such energy. He had had little leisure in his life to think of the interests which commonly occupy young people most in the interval between eighteen and twenty-four. Peter had fallen in love only once—as a boy of ten, with a little girl of rosy cheeks and blond hair, who went to the same school with him, and with whom he had faithfully shared his buttered rolls and his apples. Since then he had known no other love but that for his sister Margaret ; and, as such things will happen, he had always fancied that this love was mutual and exclusive, so that he had looked down upon all of his sister's admirers with that absolute security which so often lulls to sleep brothers who worship their sisters. His fair Margaret to be in love with an ordinary, beer-drinking, tobacco-smoking, ten-pin-rolling creature, who sat behind a desk and wrote out bills ! That was impossible—in fact, inconceivable ; and Peter had laughed at the young men who made efforts to please Margaret, as if they had been children trying to upset a lighthouse by throwing shells at it. But the laugh was no longer on his side, when one of these young men told him one fine day that he knew very well the cause of Margaret's coyness, and that her brother would be little pleased to hear it. Peter started up in his passionate love for his sister and his violent temper, and insisted upon it that the young man must eat his own words

or come out with the whole story, if he was not willing to be looked upon as a villainous story-teller. The latter, pushed to the wall, had been forced to inform Peter that his sister had an affair—not of to-day or yesterday, but which had lasted for some considerable time—with an officer, Lieutenant Arthur Hohenstein. Peter tried to laugh, but he could not do it. The young man who had given him this information was an old schoolmate of his, whom he knew to be a perfectly honorable and reliable man, so that no doubt could be entertained as to the facts. Besides, he was paymaster in the lieutenant's regiment, and knew his circumstances; and what was worst of all, he brought evidence against which Peter could not well close his eyes, unless he chose purposely not to see anything. According to the paymaster's report, Margaret's love affair had long ceased to be a secret; half the neighborhood, if not the whole, knew all about it; and the lieutenant's comrades toasted at their suppers the "Ballad," for this was the name a clever comrade of Baron Hohenstein had given the beautiful girl on account of her dark, melancholy eyes. Poor Peter was terribly distressed by this news, and wept tears in comparison with which the saddest tears he had ever shed over his inkpots were real tears of joy. His first thought was to take from the wall a rusty old cavalry pistol which he had once found in a dark corner of the rear building, and which was now hanging over his bed, in order to shoot the seducer of his sister like a mad dog. His second thought was, that he ought at all events first to question Margaret as to the truth of what he had heard, for Peter was an upright man, and hated the idea of condemning any one without a hearing. He went with a heavy heart immediately after his interview with the paymaster, to Margaret's room. She was sitting in the deep embrasure of a bay-window, around which was trained a screen of ivy, looking at the evening clouds as they drifted over the gables of the adjoining houses; and as he entered, he said, in a gentle, sad voice: "Oh, Margaret! what have I done that you no longer confide in me?"

He was going to say more, but could not go on, and threw himself into an old arm-chair opposite Margaret, and hid his face in his hand. She saw at the first glance at his disturbed countenance, and heard in the first words he had

uttered, that he knew all. The consciousness of her ingratitude towards this best and tenderest of brothers, cut her heart like a two-edged sword ; she threw herself at his feet, embraced his knees, and sobbed out: "Peter, Peter, forgive me ! I could not help myself !" This dear, pitiful voice brought Peter back to himself. He felt it was his duty to see, to judge, and to act, and that in order to do so he would need all his energy. He therefore passed his hands quickly across his eyes, as he dropped them from his face, drew his weeping sister on his knees, and let her cry out the first storm of her feelings on his bosom. Then, as her tears began to flow more gently, and her heart was no longer beating violently, he began to speak to her gently and kindly, and begged her by the memory of their youth, and by all the sorrows they had borne in common, to let him share also in this sorrow, which he knew she would not tell to the priest in the confessional, but which she surely might entrust to him, whose heart had beaten for her, and for her only, ever since he could think. And Margaret told him, with many tears and much hesitation, the romance of her life.

She told him that she had made the acquaintance of Arthur Hohenstein about a year ago, when he had come into the shop to buy a cigar-case ; he had called again and again under various pretexts, and yet she had not suspected that he came on her account, till one day he had given her a note, in which he confessed his love. "I was going to give you the letter," she said, "but I could not do it ; for—I loved him as he loved me."

Peter started like a man who suddenly sees the point of a dagger aimed at his heart ; but he remained still, and said quietly: "What happened next, Margaret?"

"I did not see him for some time, for he had told me in his letter that if I did not love him, I had better send no answer at all ; and I did not answer, and he did not come—that is, not into the shop, for I saw him pass in the street every day. At last, during Carnival—I had lost you and the others in the crowd—he was suddenly by my side. How he had found me out among all the people, I cannot imagine ; but he took my arm, and I let him do it. I did not know what I was doing, in my confusion. I only felt that

if he should ask me once more if I loved him, I should have to answer him Yes! And he did ask me, and I said, Yes, and forever!"

"And what happened next, Margaret?"

"Since then I have seen him frequently at the house of my friend Eliza, whose brother you know is assistant-surgeon in the military hospital; and he has brought me home several times."

"Is that all, Margaret?"

"It is, God help me!"

"And what do you think is to be done now?"

Margaret began to weep again. "I do not know," she sobbed; "I never thought of it."

"Yes, Margaret," said Peter, gently, "you have thought of it; and because you did not know how this would end, you have been so sad of late. You have no doubt thought at times: He will marry me. But that will not be so. He cannot marry a poor lowly-born girl, for he is an officer, and he is not allowed to marry as he chooses, even if—what I doubt very much—he should wish to marry you."

"Arthur loves me! Our position makes him as unhappy as it does me!" cried Margaret, enthusiastically.

"We'll see that!" said Peter, rising from his seat.

"What are you going to do, Peter?" asked his sister, anxiously, for she was frightened by the resolute expression of her brother's manly face.

"Nothing but go to him and arrange this matter with him."

"I shall never leave him! He will never leave me!" cried Margaret; and as she said so, a ray of the setting sun fell through the dim, leaden-framed panes upon her beautiful face, and made it all aglow with its burning cheeks and eyes full of sparkling tears. "Poor, poor child!" sighed Peter, drawing Margaret to him and kissing her on her brow.

"Be quiet, Margaret," he said; "I shall not forget that you have neither father nor mother."

Then with bowed head, but with a firm, calm step, he left the room.

Peter did not find Baron Hohenstein at his rooms. He came again next morning before parade. It was Sunday. The lieutenant was in full uniform; and Peter, who had never

seen him before, was surprised at the great beauty of the young man, although he was not exactly in a state of mind to pay much attention to such matters. On the other hand, he did not fail to notice also a certain expression of satiety, which was very distinctly visible in his large dark eyes without fire, and in the corners of the soft, full lips, over which a little black moustache was just beginning to appear.

Arthur received the brother of his beloved with such distinguished courtesy, and at the same time with such pleasing modesty in his looks and his words, that Peter Schmitz had to make quite an effort to remain firm in his purpose. He listened calmly to the lieutenant's assurances of the honesty of his intentions, the great love he felt for Margaret, and the despair with which he was filled on account of his unfortunate, dependent position. Then he said: "All this, or at least most of this, you ought to have considered, Baron Hohenstein, before you made the reputation of an honest girl the common talk at your mess-table. Now the question is only, What do you propose to do? You cannot marry my sister?"

"I am afraid not," said Arthur, dejectedly.

"For," continued Peter, "I cannot give my sister a dower of twelve thousand dollars—that is, I believe, what you must have before the government permits you to marry—and you have, as far as I know, no means of your own; but instead, if report tells the truth, many obligations which for some reason or other you are unable to discharge."

The lieutenant had blushed deeply at these last words, and had been about to break out with an angry "Sir!" but Peter's eye looked so resolute that he gave up the idea of intimidating him.

"However that may be," continued Peter again, "this much is certain. You cannot marry her. Now, as you cannot do that, and as my sister does not deserve to become the common talk of the people, I demand your word of honor that you will never approach her again, by word or letter or any way—mind me well, Baron Hohenstein!—and that you will do what in you lies to make amends for the mischief you have done, by availing yourself of every opportunity to silence all reports you may hear concerning my sister and her relations to you."

Arthur Hohenstein had listened to these words, his head resting in his hand. Now he looked up and said :

"I cannot give you my word of honor. I cannot do it, because I love Margaret—I cannot give her up, as she cannot give me up. Oh, Mr. Schmitz," continued the young man, seizing with irresistible cordiality both of Peter's hands and holding them fast, "have pity on your sister ! have pity on us both ! Do not treat me worse than my creditors do. Give me time ! Let me consider ! Is it not hard enough that I am a victim of this spirit of caste—that I am compelled to sacrifice body and soul to the Moloch of a false sense of honor ? Must you happy people who stand outside and can freely follow the inclinations of your heart, must you make our brilliant misery still more miserable by your hostile mistrust and your cold heartlessness, instead of helping us bear our burden ?"

Peter Schmitz's ears and heart were always open to the reasons which anybody wished to plead in favor of his cause, and he felt that the lieutenant's charge was not altogether unfounded. On the other side, he was conscious of having come to the man his sister loved with a sense of jealous hatred ; and that he, therefore, must be doubly watchful over himself. He told the lieutenant that, at his request, and to show his own fairness, he would give him eight days' time to consider ; and then he left him—by no means with a lighter heart than he had come.

During the next eight days an event occurred which was to be of the greatest importance for the lieutenant's position in life, and therefore also for his resolution. His father, the governor of the province, died suddenly from paralysis ; and it turned out that the great dignitary had left very heavy debts behind him in spite of his large income. His own manner of life and that of his four sons had prepared the world for such a disclosure, but his children were taken by surprise.

The poor creditors hoped at first that their illustrious debtor's promise would be fulfilled, and that his childless and unmarried brother, the general at Rheinfeld, would open his purse and satisfy their demands. They found themselves soon undeceived. The general's purse was far less open than his language. He told the creditors, when they pre-

sented themselves at the château, that they "might go to the devil;" and his nephews, that "they had helped the old gentleman cook the broth, and eat it, too, and now they might see how they could pay for it." This was, of course, more easily said than done; but as a family of such ancient renown, which had presented the country with countless majors, colonels, and generals, and at times even with privy councillors and high dignitaries in the church, could not be expected to bear the heavy burden like other people, the sovereign came to their help and paid the creditors out of his privy purse. They were distinctly told, however, that this was the last time such assistance would be given. The two elder brothers, Gisbert, then captain, and Philip, then assistant-judge—the one in his native town, the other at the capital—took the warning from the throne to heart. They became engaged as soon as possible, in order to give proof of their firm intention to break with the past. The youngest, Ernest, the wildest of the whole band, and the *enfant terrible* of the whole family, a lieutenant like his brother Arthur, threw up his commission and went to South America, where he was told he could be a general in a week if he had good luck; and thus there remained only Arthur, the handsome Hohenstein. The world took it for granted that with his good looks and his pleasant manners he would soon succeed in marrying a rich girl, and thus arrange his affairs, which were said to be still in very bad order, in spite of the royal subsidies.

But things happened very differently from what the world expected.

Four weeks had elapsed since the governor's death, and Arthur had apparently forgotten the promise he had made Peter Schmitz. Peter thought it very natural, under the circumstances, and was only troubled and pained by Margaret's looks, which became more anxious than ever as the time passed on without a decision. He tried his best to soothe his sister by the tenderest affection, but he felt that he did not succeed, and could not, and his heart grew heavier and heavier as he perceived that Margaret would never be weaned from her attachment. And still that must be done. Peter saw no other way of escape, much as he thought on the subject.

Thus they were sitting one evening opposite each other. It was November ; the autumnal wind was howling through the narrow streets ; the little panes rattled in their leaden frames under the driving rain ; and in the huge chimney, strange, melancholy noises were heard. Peter had never thought the old house so joyless and sad ; and as he looked from time to time at Margaret in the midst of his calculations, and saw her sitting silent and pale, with her work resting idle in her lap, he wondered in his despairing soul if it might not be better for the poor girl if she were lying dead in the cold, black earth, released from all grief and sorrow.

At that moment the maid came in to say that there was a gentleman outside who wished to see master. Margaret started from her revery, and pressed her hand upon her heart, anxiously fixing her eyes on the door. Peter, anticipating the same thing, rose to meet the stranger, whose tall form towered high above the maid. The visitor entered quickly, closed the door behind him, and fell at Margaret's feet, burying his face in her lap. Margaret broke into tears, and then, placing her hands gently on her lover's head, she smiled with happiness, and looked through her tears at her brother, as if she meant to say : " You see I shall be happy after all ! "

Thus at least Peter interpreted her look ; and as Arthur Hohenstein now rose and stepped up to him, extending his hand as if in obedience to an inner emotion which found no words to express itself, Peter took the hand which he had so firmly determined never to clasp again. Arthur Hohenstein, man of the world as he was, succeeded first in breaking the awkward silence which had so far reigned in the room.

" Pardon me, Mr. Schmitz," he said, " if I call upon you at your own house against your expectations and perhaps against your wishes. But I could not resist the temptation to see Margaret, and to tell you that I am more firmly resolved than ever, come what may, never to give her up."

Margaret fell in her lover's arms. Peter drummed with his fingers on the table and bit his under-lip. He was painfully embarrassed. He could not, without hurting Margaret's feelings most grievously, speak to the lieutenant as an honest man ought to speak to him. He regretted deeply in his heart the lieutenant's idea of calling on his adversary in his

own house, and thus to carry the war on ground where sun and wind were both favorable to him ; and yet he also felt, when he saw Margaret looking so happy, as if a very heavy burden had been taken off his shoulders. He was even rather proud that the son of a governor, scion of a most noble family, should come as a petitioner to him, the obscure, low-born man ; and although Peter Schmitz did not clearly acknowledge this feeling to himself, yet it did not lose its influence over his resolves on this eventful evening.

Arthur had been thoughtful enough not to come in uniform, and Peter Schmitz mentioned in the course of his conversation how much he preferred seeing him thus. The lieutenant at once replied : " Ah, you may believe me, I should be but too glad to lay aside the king's coat, which more than anything else keeps me from marrying Margaret, if I only knew what I could do without it. I am willing to give up everything for Margaret : my rank, my profession—life itself, if I could love her without living."

He put his arm around Margaret's slender waist, and thus they walked up and down in the dark background of the room ; while Peter sat by the lamp, resting his head in his left hand, and drumming with his right on the table. Suddenly he looked up and said : " Baron Hohenstein, you love my sister ?"

" Do I love her ?" cried the lieutenant, with an emphasis which sounded almost too theatrical.

" Well then," said Peter, " I will show you a way to marry her."

The lieutenant looked at Peter with some astonishment, for, to tell the truth, that possibility appeared to him to-night just as problematic as it had been four weeks ago.

" It is true," continued Peter, " it will require some self-denial and some courage on your part—I do not mean such courage as you gentlemen of the army have, but that courage which we poor people in our humble position have to practise daily, and which we value perhaps all the more highly. I have no fortune, as I told you ; but I have what is almost as good—work, paying work ; and it rests with you to share that work and the proceeds of that work. You are not older than I am, and you have had a good education. What I have learned in many years by my own industry, I

can teach you in as many weeks. Will you be my partner? I want somebody to help me, and to represent the business outside more acceptably than I can do with my rough manners. I don't know what you may lose if you accept my proposition; but I need not tell you what you gain, for that you know yourself."

The lieutenant's first impulse at this strange proposition, was to burst out laughing. But in the first place, this would have been a gross impropriety, such as a Hohenstein could not commit, especially under the circumstances; and then he loved Margaret very earnestly; finally, his situation, in spite of the favor shown to his family by the monarch himself, was still so precarious that he feared he would sooner or later have to leave the army at all events. He looked from Peter's honest face to Margaret's dark eyes, which were hanging on his lips in anxious expectation, and back again to Peter, and at last he said: "I will do all I can to show you how much I am in earnest."

Margaret threw herself, in her delight, on Arthur's bosom, and Peter offered him his hand—this time without reluctance and regret; for when Peter Schmitz had once formed a resolution, he did not shrink from the consequences.

A few weeks later, the higher society of the town was surprised by the news that "handsome Hohenstein" had left the service, and engaged himself to a pretty girl of the lower classes; not publicly—for the father's death was still too recent—but yet engaged himself in good earnest. The report even had it that the ex-lieutenant had become a sleeping partner in his future brother-in-law's business, and, as some witty man added, was going to manufacture his own paper for the notes he was in the habit of giving his creditors. The great world was amazed and disgusted at this "scandal." The general at Rheinfeld said, in his usual amiable way, alluding to the new profession his nephew had chosen, "that the ragged fellow, stripped of his king's coat, had probably counted upon him in his enterprise as a paper manufacturer; but he would have nothing to do with rags or ragged people." The brothers were aghast. One had just been made councillor, and returned to his native town; while the other had been promoted, probably in order to make him a better match for the Countess Selma Duren-

Lilienfeld, whom he was about to marry ; and both entreated him to abandon a purpose which would “disgrace” the whole family, and—if he really could not do anything better—rather to follow his younger brother’s example and emigrate.

Arthur Hohenstein’s character was by no means so very strong as to enable him to disregard entirely the entreaties of his brothers and the ironical remarks of his comrades ; on the contrary, he repented heartily twenty-four hours afterwards of the resolution which necessity and the surprise of the moment had induced him to form. But weak characters are often influenced by the simple fact that matters have gone too far to admit of retreat ; and so it was with Arthur.

Peter Schmitz had inaugurated their partnership by taking a part of the capital which was so indispensable for the carrying on of the business, to pay the lieutenant’s most pressing debts, and to provide a trousseau for Margaret. The lion’s share of care and labor fell as usual to him. The new partnership was an illustration of the well-known fable in which a giant and a dwarf went out together on their adventures. Nevertheless, and thanks mainly to Peter’s indefatigable activity and industrial genius, the enterprise went on well enough for several years, and Peter would have been perfectly contented if he had not made the painful discovery that his reward for all the sacrifices he had made for his sister’s happiness, was a daily increasing alienation between himself and this very sister. Not that Margaret meant to be ungrateful—far from it ; but, unfortunately, difficulties arose between Peter and his noble brother-in-law. The latter had surprised everybody by the rapidity with which he had settled down in his new occupation ; but slow, simple, steady work was little to his taste, and he preferred quick, exciting, and easy speculation, in which luck mainly decided—that luck on which he had formerly so often relied with more or less success at the faro-table. “Why should we plague ourselves for years when we can make as much in twenty-four hours ?” was his constant complaint, and as constantly he urged his brother-in-law to enter upon enterprises in which much could be gained, but everything might be lost, and which Peter thought he could not venture upon

without giving up the first principles of commercial honor. As soon as matters did not go quite as well as usual—when paper fell, or other unfortunate combinations affected the sales—Arthur gave vent to his indignation against Peter in Margaret's presence. "You ought to thank your brother for all this: he wants to remain a beggar. To be sure, yeoman remains yeoman, and never learns to have pluck like other men."

This difference in their ideas of business principles at last led to an open rupture between the two partners, and under circumstances which in Peter's eyes, and in the eyes of every upright man, cast a dark shadow upon the character of the nobleman who had become a manufacturer. Arthur had, without Peter's knowledge and on his private account and risk, entered upon a bold speculation, which succeeded, and made him at one venture a well-to-do man. Peter knew nothing of the matter, and Arthur gave notice that he would dissolve the partnership the moment he heard of the success of his venture, making certain difficulties, which he had purposely exaggerated, the pretext of this separation. The treachery was all the blacker as this blow was struck at a time when the outbreak of the July Revolution in France had undermined credit in Germany also, and when, on that account, the firm itself was in a most precarious condition.

The world, of course, did not take any notice of this dishonest manner of acting in the successful gambler; it only paid him greater reverence than before, since success is the world's god. It was not long before Arthur Hohenstein became one of the first men of the city. The doors of the nobles, it is true, remained closed to him as heretofore, but the citizens received him all the more cordially and with open arms. Liberal views were then the fashion; and as Arthur Hohenstein, irritated by the inexorable contempt of the men of his own caste, and especially by the consistent blindness which his brothers affected whenever they met him, purposely displayed radical views, he obtained in the easiest possible way the reputation of being a particularly well-meaning and sensible man. No one reflected that Baron Hohenstein only made a virtue of necessity; the broad-shouldered, well-to-do citizen was flattered when the small white hand of a baron pressed his own large rough ones

with cordial warmth. They made him an alderman of the city as soon as there was a vacancy in the Town Council, and were delighted when the pleasant, courteous man, who cared so kindly for the common people, took his seat among the other citizens. The government, knowing no doubt full well what the liberalism of a Baron Hohenstein could at the worst amount to, confirmed without hesitation the election by the citizens.

While Arthur Hohenstein was thus comfortably and pleasantly consuming the chestnuts of popular favor and a respectable, lucrative office, the man who had gotten the chestnuts out of the fire for him was compelled to work on after the old fashion, without any other reward than the approbation of his conscience. After Margaret's marriage, Peter Schmitz had sent for his sister Bella; but she could not replace the lost one in his heart, though she was an excellent girl, without fault or blemish, and warmly attached to her brother. Besides, her health had been seriously injured by the long slavery which the poor girl had been compelled to endure; and instead of becoming a support for Peter, who needed a strong hand and a clear mind to superintend his large household, she brought him only a patient into the house, who required nursing and all the more tender attention as she had suffered in mind even more than in body. In spite of many good and almost excellent qualities, she worried herself and her friends by her tendency to see everything in the darkest colors and by her sickly irritability, and Peter especially by her jealousy. She could not forgive her brother, that in his heart he was still devoted to his Margaret with a touching, unshaken affection. And as if that was not trouble enough, she was constantly afraid he would be caught by a coquette, who might take advantage of his blind good-nature; and thus she saw in every pretty girl of the neighborhood who ever dared to show him some friendly interest, a pretender to the seat at the head of his table.

Poor Peter! He had no time to go about and court pretty girls! He had cares enough not to think of adding the greatest of all cares to the number. Bella knew perfectly well, better than anybody else, how hard it was for Peter to keep the business going, and at the same time to assist his brother Eugene in his difficulties.

For Brother Eugene had, after his liberation from imprisonment, returned to his old occupation, and found employment in a machine shop. He had soon become foreman in the factory, had gained the good-will of the owner and the affections of his daughter, had become his partner, and at last, after the death of his father-in-law, sole proprietor of the establishment. But Eugene was born under an unlucky star. He would have succeeded in all his undertakings, if unfortunately everything had not happened differently from what it should have done. Other machine shops arose like mushrooms in his immediate neighborhood ; and Eugene, who had but a small capital invested in his business, could not keep up the competition. He went back and back, and at last—it was of course Peter again who had to help. Peter gave advice, Peter gave money, and if Eugene had followed the advice of his far more intelligent brother with the same readiness with which he took his money, all might yet have come right. But Eugene was reckless, good-natured, easily deceived, and his establishment became a very tub of the Danaids, which pitilessly swallowed up all the savings that Peter could slowly accumulate. The only pleasure which Peter had, when one of Eugene's periodic misfortunes brought him to Cologne, was his brother's only child, a dear, sweet girl, called Ottilia, who had inherited her dark hair from her Rhenish relatives ; and from her mother, whom she had lost quite early, her large blue eyes with their loving expression. Her lithe, tall figure seemed to grow every year nearer to Uncle Peter's heart ; and her cheerful, winning manners became more and more dear to him.

The years came and went with their noiseless step, which is so light and yet leaves such deep, indelible traces. The old house in River street had sunk a little lower, and the panes had become, if possible, a little dimmer, but otherwise the last twenty years had produced no essential change. All the greater were the changes in the occupants. Peter's face showed two deep lines, which rose from the root of the nose straight up on his low forehead, and many others around the lips, which were far more firmly closed than formerly. His hair, though still abundant and very stiff, had turned quite gray. This might have relieved Aunt Bella from her anxious fears that Peter, now some forty odd years old, might suddenly

take a step which would make him, in her opinion, undoubt edly the most unhappy man on earth for the rest of his life ; but she suffered all the more with rheumatism and gout. Her jealousy of Margaret, also, had by no means abated ; although for some time past the relations between Peter and his brother had become of such a nature that the brothers hardly ever met ; and that even Wolfgang, who had before felt very happy during his visits to the large, old-fashioned house in River street, now came less and less frequently, especially since he had become a student at the University of Bonn.

If Peter had only known that his sister was happy, he would have borne this alienation, if not easily, at least patiently, but Peter had many very weighty reasons to doubt of Margaret's happiness. In the first place he had always thought, and still thought at the bottom of his heart, (what of course he told nobody), that no one on earth could love and understand his sister as he did—least of all her own husband. Peter could forgive everything except dishonesty ; and in his eyes the conduct of his brother-in-law had been dishonest. A dishonest man, Peter reasoned, cannot love ; for love and truth, he said, are in reality one and the same thing. And then, it had not escaped his sharp eyes that the melancholy expression in Margaret's still beautiful face had become more and more marked with every year ; and his sharp ears had, during his rare interviews with his sister, heard many a low sigh, such as escape from the hearts of persons who are not happy, without their being aware of it.

But what troubled Peter more than anything else, were the evil reports which were still current in certain circles about the manner in which Arthur Hohenstein did business, and about the uncertainty of his financial condition. No one, of course, dared suspect the alderman of bad faith. But it was whispered about, that when he had money, he loaned it out at usurious interest ; and that when he had none, which was said to be by no means a very rare occurrence, he resorted to all kinds of manipulations, which business men of high standing are not generally willing to consider legitimate. It was also reported that he treated his debtors with the utmost severity, while his creditors rarely succeeded in recovering their money. They shrugged their shoulders

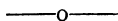
when the alderman was mentioned, and every such shrug was a stab at Peter's heart, for he thought less of his brother-in-law than of his sister ; and he felt each time as if it was she, and not he, who was thus judged by the world.

Thus the year eighteen hundred and forty-eight approached, and brought new life and new work for Peter. An honest, well-meaning, and energetic man, he had always been warmly attached to the liberal party, as could not well be otherwise with such a nature, and he had for years cherished a plan for putting the long-forgotten printing presses in the rear building once more into motion for the benefit of liberal movements. The year forty-eight brought the execution of this plan. Now wealthy men were readily found who were desirous to do something for the common good, and in a week the shares which Peter required for his enterprise were all taken. Almost as readily a chief editor for the "People's Journal" was found in the person of Peter's old friend, Doctor Bernhard Munzer. The eighteenth of March found editors, clerks, and printers—the whole staff of a daily paper—in full activity ; and Peter Schmitz rubbed his hands with delight—the first time for many, many years !—“because the 'People's Journal' had not come limping after the great event, but had, on the contrary, announced to the world long beforehand that it must inevitably take place.”

Although Peter needed only four hours' sleep, he was yet hardly able to satisfy all the demands made upon him as publisher of a daily paper, as vice-president of the Republican League, and as a member of I know not how many committees for I know not how many different purposes. About a month later, just when he was in the midst of the excitement over the elections for Frankfurth and Berlin, and he hardly knew where to find time for his various engagements, a message came to him from Thuringia, which deeply moved him, and induced him to leave for that province without delay.

The ill luck which had so persistently followed his brother Eugene in all his enterprises, had at last culminated, and then his star had sunk forever—and Brother Eugene likewise. As he was standing one fine morning in the machine shop, cheerfully chatting with his foreman about the bright prospects for the new additions to his business, he had come

too near one of the wheels, which had seized him treacherously by the coat-tail and whirled him in an instant into destruction. Otilia had fortunately been absent on a visit to distant friends when her father's fearfully mutilated body had at last been rescued from the merciless arms of the engine. The foreman—an honest man, from the Rhine, and well known to Peter—immediately wrote to the latter, informing him of the fearful event, and requesting him to come over as soon as possible, since his presence was very desirable for *many* reasons. Poor Peter knew but too well what was meant by the underscored word *many*, and took as much money as he had on hand, arranged briefly everything with Doctor Munzer for the time of his absence, told Sister Bella he hoped to return in about a week with Otilia, and begged her by all means to see to it that Margaret did not hear unawares of the death of her brother. Bella wept bitterly, and entreated Peter to be sure and not to forget his flannel jacket, and to take care that Otilia was dressed very warm for the railroad trip; and thus provided with ample instructions, Peter left the city.



CHAPTER XI.

IT was on the evening of the same day, and at the same hour, when Wolfgang parted with the schoolmaster Balthasar Hans at the little park-gate, that Aunt Bella—so she was called by old and young in the whole neighborhood—sat by the window, busy with her embroidery. Without, the light-blue sky of early spring was rising above the roofs, gables, and chimneys of the countless mass of houses, on which the last rays of the sun were casting rosy lights; but River street was narrow, as most streets are in the old town on the Rhine, and it was quite dark already in the deep, low room. Close by the window, however, where Bella was sitting, it was still tolerably light; and one who should have just then entered the room, would have seen her in the most favorable light, and Aunt Bella had no objection whatever to appear in a favorable light, for in spite of her forty-eight

years she was by no means above the vanities of the world. She had the dark hair and the dark lively eyes of the Schmitz family, but they were sunk deep in their sockets, and sickness and sorrow had long since dulled their brightness. Still one could see even now that twenty or twenty-five years ago these eyes must have been very large and beautiful and full of expression ; and even now, whenever Aunt Bella was excited by joy or wrath, a faint reflex of their former fire would blaze up. But Aunt Bella liked especially to hear her figure praised—and really it was still surprisingly youthful, slender, and elegant ; nor could it be denied that the good lady, when she was in full dress, and seen at some little distance, might still be called decidedly fine looking.

To-day, however, she had had no time to make a careful toilet. Peter had written that he would come next morning with Ottilia ; and Aunt Bella, who had expected him a day later, had had her hands full in making the necessary preparations, which had been seriously delayed by a general cleaning up feast and other heroic deeds of a domestic nature, which she had accomplished during her brother's absence—for Aunt Bella also had something of her brother's active and energetic disposition, and did not like to leave time unimproved. During the last days, besides, she had tried to drown her grief for her brother's loss, and her sorrow for the poor orphaned Ottilia, whom she had only seen ten years ago as a little girl of eight, in unceasing work and movement. She had succeeded at least in part, but it had compelled her to neglect another piece of work which she had promised to finish by this evening, and which, therefore, must be done at once, for Aunt Bella kept her word religiously. That was the reason why she had moved so close up to the window, and, with her light-blue spectacles on her nose, was sewing so industriously on her embroidery.

Aunt Bella's embroideries had quite a story of their own. She worked incredible quantities, at every hour of the day, and at every moment which she could spare from her domestic duties ; but she did not embroider for her amusement nor in order to give pleasure to others—at least not directly. Aunt Bella embroidered for money. That was a great secret, however, and as the good lady fancied, an impenetrable secret for every one born of woman. Only

her brother Peter was officially informed. For one day, soon after she had moved into his house, she had said to him: "It is not right, Peter, that you should work for us all. You have trouble enough, and it makes my heart ache to think that I am to be a burden to you too. I want to earn my living, as I have done so far. It is true I have learnt nothing; for the little French they taught me when I went to school, I have long since forgotten, and I am too old to commence again. My memory is wretched. I was trying yesterday for four hours to learn a page in the dictionary by heart, and I do not know a single word of it to-day. But I used formerly to embroider very nicely, and I have an eye for colors, and good taste, and I want to embroider for money."

Thereupon she unfolded before Peter her plan, which was to work for a shop in which Berlin wool and ready-made embroideries were sold; but not in her own name, for that might injure Peter's business, and people might say: "He does not even make enough to support his own sister." She proposed to say that a great lady, reduced in her circumstances, was making them, and that she (Aunt Bella) had undertaken, as agent of this same great personage, to dispose of the work to the firm of "Mary Blad, successor to Gardner."

Peter Schmitz laughed aloud when Bella told him of her resolution, and said: "That was folly; if they must count between them, she was assisting him in housekeeping three times as much as a regular housekeeper, and whose salary and board he would have to pay; and besides, he was fortunately still so situated that his only surviving sister—here Peter sighed and passed his hand through his hair—could live without making herself blind with those miserable embroideries. After all, however, if she wished it, he had nothing to say to it; she might try; she would soon get tired of it."

But in this point Peter was very much mistaken. He had, strangely enough, much less sympathy with the peculiarities of his elder sister, who was so very much like him in many respects, than with the finer traits in Margaret's more poetical character, which was far less practical and energetic than his own. Bella adhered to her plan with the same persist-

ent energy with which her brother was accustomed to pursue his own, as soon as they were once positively formed ; and as persistently she adhered to her secret, preserving her *alias* in the shop where she sold her work, and in the world at large, although the whole world was well aware of the true state of things. It was incredible what efforts Aunt Bella made to preserve the secret that was so well known to everybody, and yet so strictly respected ; it was incredible how many falsehoods were resorted to by the good creature, who in all other respects was honesty and uprightness personified. She haggled with the manager of the shop about a few pennies, because she could not permit the great lady, whose agent she was, to work for nothing. To deceive the friends who came to the house, she invented a host of relations in America, China, and Australia, for whose sons she worked countless travelling-bags, smoking-caps, pocket-books, and cigar-holders. At one time she was a member of a society for supplying all the churches at the Cape of Good Hope with altar-coverings ; at another time of a society which provided each one of the children of orphan-houses at their dismissal with a pair of pretty slippers, to express symbolically their wish that their path through life might be soft and pleasant. Whenever Aunt Bella had been forced into a new invention of this kind, and her conscience smote her for it, she cast a look at the weather-beaten escutcheon cut in stone and inserted above the front-door. If this almost illegible coat-of-arms was not that of the Schmitz family in whose possession the house had now been for more than a hundred years, whose was it then ? No one could tell, and until Aunt Bella had another answer than her own to this question, she was determined to call it the coat-of-arms of the Schmitz family. Nay, she thought it was more pardonable for the daughter of such an old patrician family to tell a white lie than to acknowledge the painful truth that she worked like a common workwoman for the firm of "Mary Blad, successor to Gardner."

Aunt Bella was sitting by the window sewing with intense zeal on the canvas which the mysterious lady had promised to furnish this evening, before the shop was closed. Her zeal was all the greater, as the sun had long since disappeared behind the gable of the opposite house, and Aunt Bella could not well distinguish the nicer shades of color in

the fading light. Her head bent low, her spectacles nearly slipping off her nose, she was gazing at the unlucky embroidery, which would not come to an end, and at the same time her head was full of confused thoughts. She thought of the fearful shock it must have been to Ottilia when they told her that her father was dead, and she could not even see him ; she thought of the effect the news might have had on her sister Margaret, and almost regretted she had not gone over last night to see her, instead of merely writing. Was it not strange, though, that Margaret had not come to see her ? “I believe she has lost all interest in us now, and yet she used to be such a dear, sweet, affectionate girl.” Then Aunt Bella thought of Peter’s flannel jacket, which he had no doubt laid aside during the warm weather ; and now he would catch a bad cold, rheumatism would follow next, then typhoid fever, and death was not improbable. And what would become of poor Ottilia if Peter should really die, the old house should be sold, and she and Ottilia had to go out into the wide world ? Then gout would come and attack her hands, and she would no longer be able to work, and would be obliged to go to the hospital ; and dying in the hospital, they would afterwards dissect her, or—horror of horrors !—she might only be in a trance and be buried alive ! And then she would awake in her grave, feel the heavy lid of the coffin weighing her down, know that six feet of earth were on top of that, and her cries of anguish were smothered with herself in the dread night of the grave . . . !

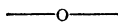
Aunt Bella gave herself up so completely to this vision that she at last found, to her dismay, how many blunders she had made in her work, thus losing altogether the labor of the last ten minutes.

She felt almost in despair, took the spectacles from her nose, and let the embroidery sink in her lap. “I am born to ill-luck,” she said, angrily ; “everything miscarries, small things and great things. On other days, when I do not want to see anybody, they come in hosts, and to-day not a soul comes, not even Clara, with her clever hands and sharp eyes. It is cruel.”

At that moment a knock was heard on the door, and a soft, melodious voice asked : “May I come in ?”

"Clara!" cried Aunt Bella, "God be thanked! Come in quickly, dearest Clara, and take off your things. You must help me about this work. Will you?"

"Can you ask, Aunt Bella!" And Clara Munzer put aside her bonnet and shawl, smoothed with her hands her plain, braided hair, and took a seat opposite to Aunt Bella at the window.



CHAPTER XII.

"**T**HERE! Now give it to me," said Clara, when Bella had told her all about her mistakes. "I shall manage it more quickly than you can, if you let me do it by myself, and I know this imperfect light is bad for your eyes."

Aunt Bella surrendered the canvas after some hesitation, took off her spectacles, leaned wearily back in her chair, and looked with pleasure at the young woman before her, who plied her needle with marvellous skill, looking up from time to time at her old friend with true, open eyes.

Clara Munzer was a declared favorite of Aunt Bella; and there were few men anywhere who did not like the quiet, modest woman. All agreed, it is true, that she was not handsome; only well made, of medium size, and slender. Her hair was dark, but not very abundant, quite smooth and worn in unpretending braids; her gray eyes looked sweet and intelligent, but would hardly have inspired a poet; her features were far from being regular, although they looked so, thanks to the harmony within; and as to her complexion, even Aunt Bella had to confess that it would have been better if there had been fewer freckles in her face. "But that is all folly," said Aunt Bella. "I was tolerably pretty when I was young, and what has that done for me? The main thing is, that the heart is right, and Clara Munzer's heart is just what it ought to be, and I only wish I could say as much of certain other people."

"How you go on, Clara!" said Aunt Bella.

"No wonder," said Clara, without even looking up from her

work ; "is not that all I know ? But must the shoes be absolutely finished to-night ?"

"Ah, dearest Clara !" said Aunt Bella. "Don't you know that wretched Orphan House Society ? Next week twelve more children are to leave, and I have been foolish enough to undertake half a dozen slippers, which must be ready to-night, to be sent off at once. Just now, when my hands are so full ! It is enough to drive one mad !"

"Has Peter written yet ?" asked Clara, in order to give the conversation another turn, less painful to Aunt Bella.

"Yes ! Did I not tell you ? He is coming to-morrow morning in the six o'clock train. Travelling all night ! Just like Peter ! I have been full of trouble and anxiety about it. You know how horribly careless he is. We shall have to be very grateful if he does not fall on the rails and is mangled there, like poor, poor Eugene . . ."

Aunt Bella's eyes filled with tears ; but she had wept so much already over Eugene's death, that she really succeeded this time in mastering her emotion.

"And poor Ottilia," she continued, "I have not seen her for ten years ; how she must have changed, the poor little thing ! I believe I should not know her, if I were to meet her in the street. Ah Clara ! I mean to pet and to cherish the poor girl, so she shall not miss father and mother here. I am sure they could not have loved her better than I mean to do. Don't you think so ?"

"I am sure of it," replied Clara, looking up from her work. "I not only believe it, but I know it. And I also know that Ottilia with her beauty will soon drive away plain Clara, and so I ought not to be as glad of her coming as I am."

"Fie ! you ought to be ashamed, Clara, to make such speeches !" said Bella. "I have never in my life yet forsaken anybody, unless I was betrayed by him, and not even then ; but certainly nobody to whom I could be useful, and who—well, Clara, you are not happy, although you always get into a passion when I say a word about that."

Clara had taken her work up again, and was sewing busily, bending her head over it lower than before. After a pause she said in a low tone without looking up :

"No, Aunt Bella, I am quite happy. Please don't say again I am not happy."

"Oh pshaw, dear Clara, truth is a stuff which you may wash as you choose ; it always keeps its color. If I could make you happy by keeping my counsel, I should not open my lips once ; but just on the contrary, I think it is always best to say out boldly how matters stand ; and if you were to tell your husband one of these days how they really stand, it would do no harm, I think."

"But, for heaven's sake, Aunt Bella, what could I tell him?" cried the young woman, in evident embarrassment.

"You ought to tell him," replied Aunt Bella eagerly, "that because he has written a couple of books he has no right to do as if he was made of better stuff than we poor mortals. You ought to tell him that he ought to be thankful to have such a sweet little wife as you are, Clara, and such sweet little children as your little ones—no, let me finish !—and then you can tell him incidentally that it is no great thing to talk all the time of the people's welfare, and the people's happiness, and heaven knows what great heroic deeds ; but that people would do well to sweep before their own door first, and that I did not mind how unhappy the people were, if he would but make his dear little wife a little happier."

Clara Munzer had repeatedly changed color during this speech, restraining her tears only by a great effort. Now, when Bella paused, she looked up with tearful eyes, and said in a soft voice, trembling with emotion :

"Aunt Bella, you know how much I love you, and how highly I esteem you ; you know you are the only friend I have, and how much I value your friendship and your love ; but just for that reason I must not listen to you when you speak thus about Bernhard ; and if it were really so, and I were really not happy, would you deprive me also of our friendship for each other?"

"Well, well !" said Aunt Bella, soothingly ; "I did not mean any harm ; between friends we must not weigh our words so carefully, or there would be an end soon of all pleasant chat. You know I think very highly of Munzer, and he deserves it ; but for that very reason he ought to attend to the main thing, or else all his learning, and his knowledge, and his talents, and Heaven knows what else, will not avail him anything—anything whatever," said

Aunt Bella, passing her left hand repeatedly over her right hand.

"But what do you want of Bernhard?" cried Clara. "Is he not very good to me, much better than such an insignificant creature as I am deserves? Is he not all affection to his children? Does he not work for us day and night?"

Aunt Bella shrugged her shoulders. "He works too much for others," she said; "and what is worse, for other people who do not concern him; and what is worst, for people who laugh at his good nature behind his back. How much does he give away every year to unlucky adventurers, who beg on the plea of their genius, and especially of late? I should not say anything if he were a rich man, but——"

"Bernhard has to do that," his wife said, very peremptorily; "he owes it to his position; he refuses many, because he cannot assist them all. I only wish he could."

"Well, never mind now, dear Clara," said Aunt Bella. "I know what I know; and what I see with my own eyes, no one can persuade me is not so. I only wish your husband may not, one of these days, like my brother, become the victim of his 'convictions,' as they call it. How was it in town to-day?"

"Very quiet; and so I hoped Bernhard might feel like taking a walk with me after his business was done at the office. I have not been out for a long time."

"I will send down stairs and inquire," said Aunt Bella.

Clara objected, but Aunt Bella insisted. The maid brought Doctor Munzer's compliments, but he had a great deal to do to-night; Mrs. Munzer had better go home alone, and soon, for there would probably be some disturbance in town that night.

"Again?" said Aunt Bella, folding her hands. "Why cannot people keep quiet? What on earth do they want? The king has given them everything. Come, dear Clara, I'll go home with you; I have to go out anyway about the slippers. Miss Blad promised to sell them for me; it is on my way. Wait a moment, dear Clara; I must change my dress, I look like a fright."

Aunt Bella disappeared in the adjoining room, and Clara heard during the next five minutes how she opened a dozen boxes and locked them again, rattling her keys very energeti-

cally ; for Aunt Bella, although painfully strict and honest herself, was still full of mistrust of others, and especially of servants, so that she never left her room without first having assured herself that every one of the countless drawers in which she kept the thousand-and-one trifles of her old-maid's finery were securely protected against attacks from without.

At last she appeared, her head covered with an old-fashioned, broad-brimmed hat, and just at that moment the maid handed her a letter in Peter's handwriting : " We shall be home Friday evening by the seven o'clock train. Both well. Send word to Munzer. *Au revoir.*"

" Well, there we are ! " cried Bella. " I knew everything would be going wrong to-day. If Peter's room were only dry. But not even that ! I cannot go with you, Clara. You will have to go alone, Clara, but do not stop on your way ; and when you pass Miss Blad's, just hand her the parcel and say it is from me. Miss Blad knows all about it. Good-by, dearest Clara. You must call to-morrow. Good-by, dear child ! " And Aunt Bella nearly pushed her friend out of the door, for Miss Blad's shop closed at half-past seven. Aunt Bella would never have forgiven herself if the fictitious great lady had once failed to keep her promise.

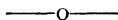
Clara Munzer had no sooner reached the corner of River street, than a cab drove up from the other side and stopped before the gable-house with the overhanging upper stories. A low, square man with gray hair jumped out, cast a quick, inquiring glance at the house, as if he wished to make sure that all was right, and then helped out a young lady, whose beauty so surprised the maid, as she came out to aid in bringing in the luggage, that she could not find an answer to her master's question : " Where on earth is Miss Bella ? "

Five minutes later the news of the arrival of master and the young lady reached Peter's room, where Bella was busy restoring order after the cleaning festival, with the assistance of a squinting apprentice, Fritz, and a good natured cook called Priscilla. She was nearly out of breath from her efforts, but she quickly handed the broom to the apprentice (who made a fearful face at her behind her back), and hurried down the narrow steps into the sitting-room. To open the door, to see beautiful Ottilia in her deep mourning, to break out in

tears, and to kiss the poor child again and again amid tears and sobs, all this was the work of a moment for good, kind-hearted Aunt Bella.

"Well, never mind now, Bella," said Peter, interfering, when at last his turn also came to be embraced; "never mind now! Help Ottilia to pull off her bonnet and cloak, and make her comfortable. I must go down to the office."

Peter Schmitz once more caressed Ottilia's beautiful cheeks with a gentle hand and paternal tenderness, and hastened to the office. He had no time to make himself comfortable when he came home from a journey.



CHAPTER XIII.

"GOOD-DAY, gentlemen! How are things coming on?" said Peter Schmitz, as he entered the room with his usual rapid step.

"Badly!" said Doctor Munzer, placing his left hand in Peter's right, and with his own right hand going on writing the article on which he was engaged.

"See there, Schmitz-*orum*!" said Doctor Holm, glad of the interruption, and rising from his chair on the other side of the table to limp towards Peter; "*prosit-orum*! How do? Happily back from the land of the evergreen pine-trees? And where left you the maiden, the most unhappy of orphans?"

"Be pleased, Holm, to wait one minute with your execrable hexameters, till I have finished this article," said Doctor Munzer.

"Let silence reign and work go on!" said Doctor Holm, with a majestic wave of his hand towards his busy colleague, while he drew Peter Schmitz to the window and asked him there, in an undertone, after the events of his journey.

The office was a tolerably large room—very dismal, however, on account of the low ceiling and the fact that the two small windows looked upon the yard. The walls had been papered, but dampness and mould had loosened the paper,

which presented in its ragged appearance a strange contrast between its baskets of fruit, grotesque birds, and fantastic flowers, and the dirt that covered everything else in the room. The furniture was extremely simple: a large, square table, covered with papers, books, and writing material, in the centre; three cane arm-chairs and a cupboard stuffed full of old papers. In a second door a small window had been inserted, which was half covered with a curtain of faded green silk, through which the printers could be seen at their cases. The atmosphere in the room was very peculiar, in spite of the open windows—an unpleasant mixture of the odor of fresh printing ink and stale tobacco smoke.

"Now!"—Doctor Munzer threw his pen on the table, handed the damp sheet through the little window with the admonition to be quick about it, and to bring the proof-sheets, and then he turned to the two men, shaking hands once more with Peter Schmitz and saying: "Now, welcome, *mon cher*! It was high time you should return. We are in a crisis. This very night the question whether the revolution is to live or to die, has to be decided for our city, and by means of the example we are going to set the other cities, perhaps also for the whole kingdom."

"Why, what is the matter?" asked Peter.

"Did not Holm tell you?" replied Doctor Munzer, with a severe look of his large, fiery blue eyes, at Holm. "What on earth have you been talking about?"

"Only about the coming of Ottilia, sweetest of maidens," replied Doctor Holm, taking his pipe from his mouth and describing an O in the air with the mouthpiece.

"Ah!" said Doctor Munzer, drily. "Well, I am glad she is here, and we shall have time enough to-morrow to rejoice at her coming. But to-day we have more serious work to do. We have determined," he continued, turning to Peter, "as I wrote you, to compel the magistrates to carry out the arming of the people in good earnest. To-night an imposing demonstration is to be made. We can dispose of five thousand workmen and other people, who are to march to the City Hall and demand arms. We must frighten the rascals; and now is our time. They will not venture to call in the military; we must strike the iron while it is hot."

"Excellent! splendid!" said Peter, who had listened, without taking his eyes off Munzer for a moment. "When is it to be?"

"We have announced a general meeting this evening at eight o'clock at the Roman Hall. It is the largest hall."

"And the best beer," said Holm.

"For Holm and other thirsty souls," continued Munzer. "I am going to speak, and you must speak, Schmitz; but do me the favor and be a little less good-natured, just for to-night as an exception. Go as far as you possibly can, and stir up the people by telling them of the unfortunate results at the South. They must learn at last that a revolution without organization in conflict with a well-organized government, is no better than a mouse in the claws of a cat."

"Doctor, the proof!" cried a voice, and a hand offered the damp sheet through the window.

"An extra?" asked Schmitz.

"Yes!" replied Munzer, going to his seat at the table, the sheet in hand; "only a few lines; the last news, and a few appropriate remarks."

"Inappropriate, you ought to say," growled Doctor Holm, who had taken his seat again in the chair opposite to Doctor Munzer, and who now filled his pipe from a drawer in the table, which contained his supply of tobacco. Peter Schmitz, evidently busy in his mind with the speech he was going to deliver, walked rapidly up and down in the room, and passed his hand incessantly through his thick gray hair.

Munzer finished his corrections, returned the sheet through the little window, admonishing the foreman, Muller, once more to hasten the matter so that the printers could go and attend the meeting, and then remained standing with his arms folded and his back leaning against the door-post, while his eyes were fixed thoughtfully on the ground.

"It is remarkable," he said, after a pause, and as if speaking to himself, "that we Germans never have the courage to act till it is too late for action. If we were to follow you, Holm, we would now adjourn to an inn, instead of holding a meeting; we would probably have a few speeches over our beer, but very good-natured ones, and we would explain to the good citizens how, if the government should ever put

a sword in our hands, we would prepare and lunge and thrust . . .”

“You said a great word in your innocence,” replied Holm, kindly. “Much do I want indeed a refreshing drink at the tavern—for, in spite of all who despise the world and the good things thereof,

‘To the good man it is granted,
At night, when rest is wanted,
To meditate and think :
Where can I get good drink?’

But this desire, common to all mankind, is not my reason for voting against your plans, but my very special conviction that the moment is ill-chosen for a *coup de main*, and that we shall fail lamentably.”

“But why, for heaven’s sake? Why? why?” cried Peter Schmitz, who had repeatedly opened his lips to say something, while Doctor Holm had given his opinion very slowly, as was his habit. “The moment could not be more favorable; the occurrences at the South are most encouraging, and . . .”

“Discouraging, you mean to say,” remarked Doctor Holm, interrupting him. “They are against us altogether. They show very clearly to all who are not, like yourselves, blinded by passion, that the cause of the people finds very little support among the people themselves. That will not prevent the peaceful citizen from seeing in every little row a revolutionary rising, but it will frighten our people, and justly so, and at such a moment you demand arms for the people! That means to the mind of the fanatic adherents of the government, ‘You proclaim a republic!’ You will see how far that leads you! But if the thing miscarries—and I am confident it will miscarry—then the consequences may be pretty bad for us. Your election, friend Munzer, is by no means sure. President Hohenstein has many more votes than you think, and to-night you will drive all the uncertain and wavering voters into his net, who might possibly have voted for you. Therefore I say, better it were if we drank an abundance of luscious March-beer, or of the golden juice of the grape, though I prefer the former.”

Doctor Holm had in his last words resumed his ordinary good-humored tone, which he was apt to exchange for a

very pathetic manner of speaking when he became excited.

Munzer had listened with great attention. "Yes, yes," he said, and an ironical smile played over his features, "Holm is right, quite right for all who in their political calculations look upon man as the cynic does, and sees in him nothing but a two-legged animal, with eyes cast down, and no care but for the stomach. But I do not intend looking upon him in that light, even at the risk of being mistaken. I mean to act as if I had to do with men, and not with brutal carnivorous and herbivorous animals; and besides, it is too late to repent. The meeting has been advertised, and everybody knows what is intended; if we were now to change front, we should be reproached not only with excessive caution, but with absolute cowardice, and thus lose credit for the future. Don't you think so, Schmitz?"

"Most assuredly," replied Peter; "I am in favor of doing something serious at last. You know my motto: Rather the end with horror, than horror without an end. I have found the disposition of the people generally very good. They only wait for some decisive blow in one of the large cities. The people are determined, but if you do not make a start, the best of machines remains inactive."

"That is exactly what I say," exclaimed Doctor Holm, now really excited. "You look upon the people to-day as an inert machine, which you can manage as you choose, and to-morrow it is the essence of life, of energy and wisdom. It is neither the one nor the other, but simply a mass of more or less good men and more or less bad musicians, each one of whom has his own interests; and if you wish to make the whole company act in concert, you must first learn how to reconcile all these millions of individual ambitions. There is the mystery."

"What is the use of talking?" cried Munzer, impatiently. "We have gone too far to hold back. It is time to attend the meeting; we must not delay. Are you going or not?"

"Why will you at once flare up and become violent?" replied Holm, emptying his pipe; "when all go, Holm will not stay behind. Holm does not contradict himself so badly. Up, to Rome! A knock! Come in! What new nuisance is this?"

The door opened suddenly, and in rushed a thick-set, broad-shouldered man in a blue blouse, whose coarse face was covered with coal-dust, perspiration, and blood, and whose small, squinting eyes shone with passion. He had hardly entered, when he cried, out of breath: "We are betrayed! we are betrayed!"

"What is the matter, Christopher?" all three asked, as with one voice.

"That dog, that pale, yellow-toothed rascal!" cried Christopher, and aimed a blow at somebody with his gigantic hand, which would have infallibly floored the most powerful adversary.

"Well, Christopher, what is it?" asked Munzer, with a calmness very little in harmony with his anxious looks.

"That's what it is!" replied Christopher. He took off his cap, and with his cap a blood-stained, ragged cotton handkerchief, which had been put on a wound in his head; a few drops of blood trickled through the bushy black hair upon his forehead.

"Here, take some water from this caraffe," said Peter Schmitz, "and sit down. You'll faint."

Christopher grinned. "Not so easily, Mr. Schmitz; I have been knocked down worse than that, and it is my rage that makes me so mad. But I'll give it to that dog! He shall pay for it!"

Christopher poured water on the handkerchief, pressed it on his head, and putting his cap on again, he said: "By your leave, gentlemen, it won't stay otherwise; and now, I'll tell you what has made me so terribly mad. About half an hour ago, the foreman, that yellow-toothed, pale rascal, came into our section and said: 'We shall shut up shop early to-night, and Mr. Heydman begs—' just listen, gentlemen, he said begs!—'you will all come out into the yard, where the others are already waiting; he wants to say a few words to us.' I up and told him that if Mr. Heydman was not going to say that we should have an hour less work every day, and a quarter of a dollar more wages, he might shut up! Well, gentlemen, that was all right, I tell you, for you see, doctor—"

"Go on, go on!" said Doctor Munzer, impatiently.

"So we went into the yard, and whom did we find there but all the other men, perhaps a hundred or more, and in

their midst Mr. Heydman and"—here Christopher glanced with his squinting eyes at Peter Schmitz—"and well, Mr. Schmitz, it isn't your fault, but I should not like to have such a rascal for my brother-in-law."

"Was the alderman there?" asked Peter.

"Yes, and he gave us a long speech: told us that of course we were not as well treated as we deserved; but if we would only have patience, things would be better in a short time; only we must keep very quiet, and not make any disturbance. That's why he did not want us to go to the meeting to-night. The men, he said, who were the leaders in that movement, were members of the Republican League, who only wanted to fish in troubled waters, and did not care the snap of the finger for us, and a good deal more of such stuff, that I have forgotten again. I thought, I'll salt your soup for you, so you can't eat it, and I stepped forward and said: Friends, that is all stuff and nonsense. If the alderman knows how he can help us, he had better come to the meeting. There are men there who can answer him better than such simple folks as we are. And besides, said I, the alderman ought to be ashamed to talk that way of the gentlemen of the Republican League, when he knows very well that his own brother-in-law, Mr. Schmitz, is vice-president of that League, and it is a poor bird that fouls his own nest. Now I thought they would all cry: 'three cheers for Christopher!' but no such luck; they hung their heads; and the foreman, that nasty dog, seizes me by the breast, and cries: 'Out with the troublesome fellow!' and Mr. Heydman cries: 'Don't let him show himself again in the factory!' and a dozen cowardly curs, whose backs I have tanned from time to time, cry too: 'Out, out with him!' As I shook off the foreman, and he fell rather hard against the wall, they all rushed upon me. Well, gentlemen, I fought as well as I could, but many hounds are the hare's death, and at last they pitched me out of the yard into the street; but I'll make them pay for it, as sure as my name is Christopher Unkel!"

Christopher beat upon the table so that the ink spirted out of the ink-stand upon the papers. The three men looked at each other.

"Yes," Christopher continued, "and the alderman has

also been at Scheider's and at Greathead & Co., and the other workshops, saying at each place that they had received him well everywhere, and *they* surely would not make an exception."

"That looks bad," said Peter Schmitz.

"Foul-orum!" said Doctor Holm.

"Come what may!" cried Munzer, vehemently, "we must do our duty. To retreat now, means to give up the game; and I shall certainly see first if my voice has lost its power over the people. Are you coming or not?"

Munzer had started up, pressing his slouched hat on his dark curly hair.

"Hurrah!" cried Christopher. "Now for it! We'll knock them together so that they sha'n't be able to move their bones for a week."

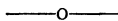
"Of course, we are coming," said Peter Schmitz, taking his dusty overcoat, which he had laid on the window-sill when he came in, and hanging it over his arm.

"Give me your arm, Oh Christopher, mighty and muscular brother!" said Doctor Holm, slowly rising from his arm-chair.

The four men left the office. In the hall Peter recollected that he had not said good-by to the ladies.

"Why should you disturb the peace of the good souls?" said Munzer; "we have not a minute to lose, come on!"

They reached the street, and were here received by a crowd of mechanics and workmen of like views, who had been waiting for the "gentlemen of the People's Journal," in order to carry them in triumph to the Roman Hall, the large beer house in the suburbs where the meeting was to be held.



CHAPTER XIV.

IT was perhaps two hours later. The spring night had spread its soft transparent veil over the woods and fields, the river and the town. The full moon was floating over the dark blue sky, and bathed the crowd of steeples, gables, and roofs in its peaceful light.

But down below, in the moonlit streets between the towering houses, a countless multitude was restlessly surging to and fro. The beautiful spring night and the vague report that "something would happen," which had spread over the whole city, kept the people wide awake. They were standing about in small groups in the streets and on the public squares; they were moving in crowds, shouting and singing through the great thoroughfares. It was as noisy as in the time of the carnival, but instead of exuberant joyousness, vague disquiet and anxious expectation filled to-day all minds.

In the great room of the old City Hall the fathers of the city had been assembled since the afternoon, with their president, the chief burgomaster, doctor at law, Sebaldus Dasch. Mr. Sebaldus Dasch was a fine looking gentleman, six feet high in his stocking feet, and at the same time unusually stout and broad shouldered. Perhaps Mr. Sebaldus Dasch would not have become so very broad and large, if since he assumed his high office ten years ago he had had to endure only once a month for twenty-four hours as much anxiety as he suffered to-day. His rivals and adversaries asserted even, that since last March he had lost a pound of flesh a day, and it could not be denied that his bloated face had altogether lost that self-confident, not to say impudent smile, which was ordinarily playing about his thick, coarse lips and his small half-closed eyes. But he had, on the other hand, never ceased wiping the perspiration from his care-worn brow, especially on this beautiful, warm spring evening.

It was, to be sure, very close in the lofty council-room, behind the immensely thick walls, and it was not to be wondered at that the chief burgomaster and the other members of the council were every moment going to the deep embrasures of the windows, to look through the carefully-drawn green curtains upon the great square below, which was filled with people. They drew a sigh of relief when they saw the battalion of town militia, which had been under arms since an early hour of the afternoon, still maintaining its position in front of the City Hall. But the darker it grew, and the redder the flames in the immense brasiers before the entrance-gate of the City Hall fell upon the gable-end of the house on

the square, the more anxiously the gentlemen looked at their own situation. It seemed to be beyond doubt now that the leaders of the crowd purposely prolonged the popular meeting at the Roman Hall, in order to carry out their abominable purposes under the shelter of night. What might not be expected from the insolence of these people? Plundering, burning, murder—these were the first acts, no doubt, to be perpetrated.

It was in vain that some of the less timid members tried to rouse the failing courage of the others by showing them that things were not quite as bad as they seemed. Alderman Hohenstein, especially, pointed out the great success with which his efforts to win the workmen in the factories for the good cause had been crowned. He had visited during the afternoon, under direction of the council, six large establishments, and had everywhere found the men remarkably well disposed. Only in the large machine-shop of Heydman & Co. a few voices had been raised in opposition, but these also had been promptly and energetically silenced. Now, he maintained, there was no cause for apprehension, so long as this dangerous class of laborers was not in union with the rebels. Then Baron Hohenstein remarked that, unless the messengers sent out at different times had all of them told falsehoods, the popular meeting was by no means as well attended as the leaders of the populace had hoped, and the friends of good order had feared. Instead of six thousand, perhaps as many hundreds, and rather less than more. His only apprehension was, that the late hour might suggest some demonstration; he added that Doctor Munzer was a dangerous subject; and his brother-in-law, Peter Schmitz—here the alderman shrugged his shoulders—to say the least, a very eccentric man; but that both of them were too sensible to join an undertaking which, they could not doubt, must end badly, and might compromise them irreparably, and even endanger their lives. Finally, he assured them that several of his former friends among the officers had repeatedly told him that the troops were burning with the desire to punish the populace for their sufferings during the long confinement to barracks, and that they only waited for the order to fall upon the rioters.

Baron Hohenstein did not convince them, it is true, but

they all acknowledged the great—or, as Burgomaster Dasch emphatically called them, the immortal—services which he had rendered the city to-day by his prudent, energetic manner of action ; and they were all the more grateful now, as they had probably expected very different things from the alderman whose liberal views had brought him into bad repute with some. But the last eight days had produced a remarkable change in the views of the alderman ; he had made a very decided turn “to the right.” It was said he had been reconciled to his enormously rich uncle, the old general at Rheinfeld ; and of his relations to his brothers, all the world had been able to judge this afternoon, when President Hohenstein had come to the City Hall to confer with the Town Council : the two brothers had openly embraced each other in the great hall in the presence of all the clerks and messengers. Well, after all, it was not so very strange that a nobleman of such old and unmixed descent should recollect at the decisive moment that his ancestors had, centuries before the reigning dynasty, obtained possession of the province, ruled here as imperial barons, with the right even to take the lives of their serfs.

Amid these confused discussions and much anxious expectation half-past nine o'clock had come, and yet no decision had been formed. The battalion of city militia which was posted before the City Hall had been relieved by another battalion, which, however, was said to be by no means as reliable as the other. A few voices in the ranks had already been heard to say that it was ridiculous to stand there for nothing, and to let the pitch from the big brasiers drop upon their clothes. If the republicans were really to set the whole town on fire, it would be better to go home and to look after their families. It was in vain that the officers tried to quiet the men, in vain even that the chief burgomaster, Doctor Dasch, addressed them from the top of the great staircase before the City Hall. His pathetic question : “Are we not all children of the same town ?” had been answered by a coarse voice with the words : “Yes indeed, some with roast beef and some without !” and another : “Three cheers for fat Doctor Dasch, and three more for ourselves !”—a cry which had been unanimously taken up by people and soldiers alike. At last they had promised to

wait half an hour longer ; after that, if " nothing happened," they must go home.

The chief burgomaster returned to the council-room perspiring and breathless. He ordered the doors to be closed, requested the gentlemen to listen to him a few moments, and said, when all had taken their seats at the green table, in a low whisper, as if he feared his words might be heard outside through the huge walls and thick doors :

"Gentlemen ! the decisive moment has come. I cannot doubt that any longer after what I have just seen and heard. A fanatical populace tyrannizes over the well-disposed ; the militia threatens to desert us ; we can rely no longer on any one except ourselves and the glorious army, the last support of the throne, the altar, and the hearth. The commandant of the city, Count Hinkel-Gackel, has this moment placed once more all of the regular troops at my disposal. I think I have acted in accordance with your views, gentlemen, in sending him word that I would avail myself of his offer if in half an hour the threatening clouds which now darken the horizon are not dispersed. Gentlemen, I know that under such trying circumstances a voluntary delay of this extent is a self-denial amounting almost to heroism ; but, gentlemen, I believe that for the sake of your own dignity, our honor, and in remembrance of certain events in our city which are still fresh in our memories, we ought to avoid a conflict between the populace and the soldiers as long as it is at all compatible with the general welfare. I know, gentlemen, that I assume an immense responsibility. I know that this half hour may become of the utmost importance to many excellent men, may become fatal to many of us, and especially to me, whom the lightning from the dark clouds may strike down at any moment. But when the tempest breaks forth, it will find us all at our post. Is it not so, gentlemen ? You will not abandon your chief burgomaster ?"

Mr. Sebaldus Dasch had spoken these last words with almost broken voice. He was deeply moved, and had to pause a moment to wipe the perspiration from his forehead. It was a solemn moment, when all the gentlemen present rose from their chairs and thus made known to him that they were determined to live or to die with their heroic chief.

"But," continued Mr. Sebaldus Dasch, after the low murmur of applause had passed away under the vaulted ceiling of the hall, "although we may be prepared to risk our lives in the good cause and to pledge our fortunes for its success, we are yet bound to secure the property of the city against a populace eager to rob and to plunder. Above all, the six hundred thousand dollars in city obligations, which, as you gentlemen know, have not yet been emitted for reasons of expediency, and which are safely stowed away upstairs in the City Treasury—how easily it may happen that this circumstance has come to the knowledge of one of the leaders of the riot!—that"—here Mr. Dasch pointed at the door and whispered in a mere breath—"that treason may lurk at that door! Are we quite sure of all our clerks, our messengers and pages? Have we any right to rely implicitly on their attachment, on their gratitude? No, gentlemen, do not let us close our eyes to the dangers of our situation! We are isolated; we can only rely on ourselves. Therefore, hear what I propose! The obligations and all other valuable papers must not remain at a place which is known to so many. We must try to conceal them somewhere else; and thanks to my special intimacy with all the localities and secret recesses of the building, I have been able to discover a hiding-place which would defy the ingenuity of the most expert thief. But for reasons which I need not explain, it would be inexpedient for the Council to assist in the transportation of the treasure in a body. I propose, therefore, the appointment of a committee, consisting of myself and another member of your body, to take the place of the treasurer, who is unfortunately absent on account of sickness."

"I nominate for that purpose my esteemed colleague and friend, Baron Hohenstein, to whom we are all indebted for the invaluable services which he has to-day rendered the commonwealth," squeaked the owner of the large machine-shop, Alderman Heydman.

Again a low murmur of applause was re-echoed from the vaulted ceiling. The chief burgomaster rose, and with him the other fathers of the city.

"I thank you, gentlemen," said Mr. Sebaldus Dasch, "with all my heart, for the cool calmness and admirable pres-

ence of mind which you have exhibited at so critical a moment, and I request my much valued friend and colleague, Alderman Baron Hohenstein, to accept his unanimous election for that important trust."

Baron Hohenstein said: "My head and my arm belong to the city," and he placed his hand on his heart and bowed gracefully.

When the chief burgomaster and Baron Hohenstein had left the council-room, some one remarked that when Mr. Heydman had mentioned Hohenstein's name, the latter had turned deadly pale, and that his hand had shaken most nervously when he had seized a candlestick to accompany Mr. Dasch; an assertion which Mr. Heydman and others contradicted positively. He observed that Baron Hohenstein had on the contrary shown to-day most signally how well the alderman had preserved the courage of the nobleman and the officer.

The chief burgomaster and Hohenstein had in the meantime walked down a long, narrow passage, till at the end they reached a back-staircase leading to the upper story of the City Hall, then again down a long passage to a door which, besides the usual contrivances, had two crossbars with very complicated locks. Through this door, which they carefully locked again from the inside, they entered into the record-room, and proceeded from this to a musty, melancholy-looking room, the windows of which were provided with strong iron bars, in honor of several iron boxes and safes which constituted its entire furniture. This room was the City Treasury.

"Uff!" said Dr. Dasch, after having closed the heavy door again; "this heat will kill me!"

"I am rather chilly," said Baron Hohenstein; "it seems to me, it is very cold here."

"It is very damp," said Dr. Dasch; "we shall catch our death yet on account of these rascally democrats. Let us go to work, my dear colleague. The city obligations are in that big box; they are most important. The other certificates can be advertised, but who can protect us against our own local currency, if that is once in circulation among the people? I think, therefore, my dear colleague, we had better put the six hundred thousand first in safety. They are in a

sheet-iron box in that big box. Pray let me do it! Uff! You see, that is the box. And now please take out that smaller one, also. That contains the first four hundred thousand. It is possible we may not be able to get the big box into the secret place which I have found, and then we must take the money out. This little key fits both the boxes."

Baron Hohenstein took the two boxes that had been pointed out to him. As he turned round, the heavy lid of the big box closed with a loud noise. Baron Hohenstein started and uttered a low cry.

"I hope you were not hurt," asked the burgomaster, anxiously.

"No," replied the alderman. "I do not know; my nerves are out of order to-day. The day has been trying, and then my wife's illness——"

"Let us get out of this hole," said the other; "I begin to feel chilly too. I will show you the place I had in my mind."

They left the treasury and went rapidly back, so as to avoid meeting anybody through the same passage, till they came to another door, which the burgomaster, who now carried the candlestick, unlocked himself.

"This is my private office, as you see," he said. "I think the rascals will be too cunning to suppose I would hide our treasures in my own room; they will rather look for them in every cellar and garret. You see, here is the cupboard, a simple cupboard, which nobody but myself, I think, has ever noticed. I have discovered it accidentally, and use it, as you see, to keep a few bottles of wine on hand. Pray put the bottles on the upper shelf, and then help me to push the box in here."

But the box would not be pushed into the small space. They tried it in every way, but it could not be done.

"I thought so," said the burgomaster, distressed.

"We must look for another hiding-place," replied Hohenstein.

"I know of no other, and time is precious. We will take them out; that is the best we can do; here is the key; I always carry it with me. Let us see if the other box goes in. Excellent! Now quick, take it down again; we must not lose a moment."

Mr. Dasch opened the full box. There they were in nice packages ; dozens and dozens of hundred-dollar parcels in one and five-dollar notes, and dozens and dozens of thousand-dollar parcels in fifty and hundred-dollar notes.

"I will hand them to you," said the chief burgomaster ; "and you pile the stuff up in the smaller box. What a heart-breaking job that would be for a poor man. God be thanked that we are both of us well to do. What is the matter with you ?"

"Oh nothing," said Baron Hohenstein, sitting down on a chair and wiping the cold perspiration from his brow ; "my nerves are somewhat affected, it will pass in a moment."

"Take a glass of this port-wine," said the chief burgomaster, taking one of the bottles down from the shelf ; "it will do you good."

Baron Hohenstein poured with trembling hand some of it into a tumbler that stood on the table by the side of the water carafe, and emptied it at once.

"How do you feel now?" asked Dr. Dasch.

"Better," replied Hohenstein.

"Then let us make haste to finish."

At that moment loud cries were heard from the public square, upon which the windows of the room looked.

"What is that?" said the chief burgomaster, and in his fright he dropped the packages which he was holding in his hand.

The two men hastened to the window. The bright moonlight and the flames of the huge pitch-pans before the building allowed everything to be seen very clearly. From one of the streets that opened on the square, a black column of men was slowly coming forward in the direction of the City Hall. The crowd that had for some time filled the square, swayed to and fro, mostly to meet the new-comers, cheering, whistling, yelling. Through the tumult the command of the fat militia major was heard : "Carry arms ! Carry arms !" but it could be seen that very few of the men obeyed orders.

The chief burgomaster trembled in all his limbs.

"We are lost !" he groaned ; "what shall we do ?"

"Hasten down, my dear sir," replied Baron Hohenstein, promptly ; "your presence is absolutely necessary there. Offer the rioters a compromise ; promise them arms, any-

thing, until you can obtain troops. But hasten, I pray you, or you will find everything ruined. I will follow as soon as I have done here."

"Had not you better go in my place!" stammered the other, piteously.

"But, dear doctor, am I chief burgomaster?" said Baron Hohenstein.

"You are right! I am going; I must go; I must do my duty! But come as soon as possible."

"As soon as I can," replied Hohenstein, almost pushing the chicken-hearted colossus out of the door.

The door closed behind the chief burgomaster, and Baron Hohenstein hastily pushed the latch across. Then he rushed to the table, where the wine was, filled the tumbler once more to the brim, and drank eagerly, till it was empty. He put the glass on the table and looked with burning eyes all around. Then he raised both his hands, ice-cold as they were, to his hot brow, and then he laughed aloud.

Was it not laughable? He, overwhelmed with debts, scarcely able to keep his head above water, threatened with instant ruin—he here handling treasures of which the twentieth part would save him from all his troubles; he had only to-day been considering—and how often he had done so in the last ten years!—whether it would not be best to blow out his brains; but it was time enough for that when the theft should be discovered. Theft! Oh no! not theft! only a useful employment of money which lay here unemployed, idle; and then he would of course replace it. One or the other speculation was sure to succeed; and then his uncle at Rheinfeld, who seemed to be perfectly crazy about his boy, and who would surely not let the boy's father be sent to the penitentiary; and then the treasurer who managed the city finances was sickly, and timid too; he had long since mentioned that he was not the man for this office in such dangerous times, and that he would resign his place. It was in the highest degree probable that he who had made himself so useful in these days would be appointed his successor, and then he could easily make good the deficit in the treasury; or should he take the six hundred thousand dollars as they were, and try to escape? He could no doubt do it easily to-night. He could sell the notes in London for half their

value, or even less, and take a steamer to America with the proceeds, and his wife, who, when his restlessness had driven him out of the house this afternoon, had taken his hands so anxiously, and his son, whom he expected back this evening, and who would be at his house when he came home. But what he did, he did for his wife and his boy, not for himself. He was not afraid of death! He had stood more than once at the mouth of a pistol in the hands of an adversary, and day after to-morrow a note of ten thousand dollars had to be paid: ten little packages of the pile before him, so small that he can easily put them in a side-pocket of his coat; but it is too late; you have delayed too long.

Baron Hohenstein looked at the clock that was hanging opposite on the wall, and upon which his glance had accidentally fallen when he put the empty bottle back on the table. It had pointed at ten o'clock; it still pointed at ten! It must have stopped! No, the pendulum was still swinging to and fro, and the great clock in the tower above him began just to strike. The whole world of his madly confused thoughts had been crowded into the narrow space of a single moment.

It was time yet!—There! Were those steps coming up the passage? Nearer, nearer, quite near—now or never! *Va banque!* what is it, after all? Life and honor on a cast of the die . . .

A noise at the door.

“What is it?”

“Oh, baron!”

“Who is that?”

“I! Council-Messenger Wenzel! The chief burgomaster begs you will come at once!”

“Directly!”

The box of sheet-iron stands, locked, in the cupboard; the false door closes the aperture so accurately; when he turns back again he can hardly discover it himself. He draws a long breath. He buttons his light over-coat close across his chest, and the next moment it occurs to him that that might create suspicion, so he unbuttons it again. He opens the door, the candlestick in his hand. The old messenger Wenzel exclaims: “Great God, sir! you look like a corpse!”

"I was very unwell in there, my dear Wenzel ; but now I am better. Please take the candle and show me the way. How are they all at home, dear Wenzel ?"

"Much obliged, alderman, very well !" replies the messenger, very curious to know how the great alderman comes to ask such a question just now.

"Rather tight, I suppose ; the pay is not always sufficient."

"Well, baron, we must make it do," said the messenger, utterly unable to see how the great man can think of such matters at this moment, and ascribing it, in his mind, to his indisposition.

"Will you take my arm to rest upon, sir ?" he asked, turning back.

"Thank you, thank you," answers Baron Hohenstein, who had buttoned the last button on his paletot at the very moment, when Wenzel turns round, and now tears them all open again.

The old man says nothing more, but walks faster ; he feels uncomfortable with the odd speeches and the strange manner of the sick alderman.

They are in the second story, in the large hall before the council-room. The chief burgomaster and several other members are just coming out ; others are standing in the large, semi-circular bay window, above the great front entrance, from whence they can see more plainly what is going on below in the square, than from the council-room. The chief burgomaster walks up to Hohenstein and draws him aside. His face is radiant with joy.

"I believe we have had our trouble for nothing, dear colleague ; the rabble is scattering to the four winds since Munzer has spoken to them. Where is the key to the strong box and to the cupboard ?"

"Here, and here."

"Thanks, thanks ! I suppose I can let the whole box, as it stands, be carried back again into the Treasury."

"Certainly, certainly ! The only difference is, that the money is now in the little box instead of the big box."

"A thousand thanks, my very dear colleague."

And the chief burgomaster in his enthusiasm embraced Baron Hohenstein repeatedly. Other gentlemen, among

them the owner of the great machine-shops, Mr. Heydman & Co., also come up with their congratulations and expressions of gratitude ; they all shake hands with him, and call him the hero of the day, who has saved the city.

Baron Hohenstein declines these honors almost vehemently.

"I thank you, gentlemen," he said ; "I have only done my duty. Excuse me, gentlemen, I am quite unwell, and should like to ask leave to go home to my sick wife."

"A carriage for Baron Hohenstein !—a carriage !"

"I should prefer walking ; the night air will do me good. Good night ! good night, gentlemen !"

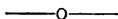
Baron Hohenstein pushed his way through the crowd like a man who fears he will faint if he does not promptly reach the fresh air.

"I said so !" remarked one of the aldermen ; "he looked pale and haggard when he went upstairs with the chief burgomaster."

"No wonder !" observed another ; "he has worked tremendously to-day, and his wife is sick at home."

"And to-morrow, the last day of the month," whispered Mr. Coldblood, a lawyer and deputy alderman ; "I wonder how he'll pay his notes ?"

"Gentlemen !" said the chief burgomaster, "I am sure I cannot foresee the future, and I do not know what the next day may bring us, but I think we may congratulate ourselves upon having saved the city this time by our calmness and presence of mind from the threatened ruin, and without bloodshed."



CHAPTER XV.

THE danger to which the town was said to have been exposed, was in reality not half as great as it had appeared to the members of the City Council through the magnifying glass of their fears ; or rather, to tell the truth, there had been no danger at all. As Doctor Holm had predicted, the great meeting at Roman Hall, instead of

being attended by six thousand, upon whom Doctor Munzer and Peter Schmitz had counted, had consisted of scarcely as many hundred, and even among these six hundred very few had been in favor of desperate measures. The address of Baron Hohenstein at the different large factories had made a great impression upon the workmen. They had either stayed away from the meeting, or at least shown very little zeal for the common cause. They stated quite openly that they could not see any use in having arms distributed among the people, as long as wages were not increased, and the working time was not reduced. If they were now to stand guard in addition, and to patrol the city, their wives and children would starve soon enough. It was in vain that Doctor Munzer, Peter Schmitz, and finally also Doctor Holm exhausted their eloquence to prove to them that they were putting the question upside down ; that in politics and public life power was the first, and justice only the second question, and that all the rights they might extort from their oppressors in a moment of anxiety, would instantly be revoked as soon as they regained the power in their hand. There seemed to be a spell on the meeting ; they would not warm up ; and Munzer, who had been called upon to preside, was prudent enough not to push his resolutions, which the small number of people assembled at the Roman Hall were in all probability unwilling to adopt. Nevertheless he did what he could to prolong the meeting, in order to conceal under the darkness of night the miserable failure of his great enterprise, which he had announced in such pompous words. At last they resolved to move in columns from the Roman Hall to the great square before the City Hall, and there in the face of the assembled militia to break up with three cheers for Liberty. A few Hotspurs in the assembly—among them especially the locksmith Christopher Unkel—grumbled aloud against such an insignificant demonstration ; but they were outvoted, and at half-past nine o'clock the march began : at the head the presiding officers of the meeting, Munzer, Peter Schmitz, Holm (resting on the powerful arm of Christopher), and others, all of them singing the Schleswig-Holstein hymn.

Before the City Hall Munzer addressed the people, thanking them for the confidence with which they had honored

him, and declaring that they must strictly adhere to the resolutions which they had passed.

"We have," he said, and his powerful voice sounded far over the crowded square, "we have resolved to-night to show our adversaries, by our self-denial and by our moderation, that it is only their bad conscience which prevents them from admitting us to their ranks. They may doubt the prudence of this step, but they will have to acknowledge the generosity which has prompted it. We mean to be strong in our weakness, we mean to profit by our abstinence, and to conquer without a battle. Let our adversaries learn from our example! May they never forget that possession is not always the same as right, and that unrighteous possession is like a sword eaten by rust. Let this rust go on and corrode their swords! It does its work slowly, by centuries, by thousands of years; and our life is, when it lasts longest, seventy or eighty years. But the people live forever; the people can wait; long life to a generous, noble, undying people! And herewith I dissolve this meeting; let each one go home quietly; it is time to retire, and our adversaries must not say that we have neglected even the least of the duties of a good citizen!"

"Three cheers for Doctor Munzer! Hip, hip, hurrah!"

The hundreds and perhaps thousands who had listened to Doctor Munzer's speech, dispersed noisily hither and thither.

"It seems to me, Doctor Munzer, you spoke ironically about the people," said Doctor Holm, who was still standing near the speaker, with Peter Schmitz and a few others.

"And had I not a fair right to do so?" asked Munzer, savagely. "Is that a people? A flock of sheep they are! Nothing else! Let somebody else drive them now! I am tired of it!"

He drew his slouched hat over his face and hastened with long strides away from his friends, into the dark night.

Dark dismay was brooding over his soul. He had been compelled to-night to do himself great violence before this crowd of blind and stupid people; and now, when he found himself alone, fierce wrath and indignation broke like a stream of hot lava from his proud heart. In savage words, of which every now and then one would break through his

firmly-compressed teeth, he rebuked the people as a father rebukes his misguided sons, of whom in his partiality he hoped such great things. He repeated to himself, with bitter irony and loud laughter, Goethe's words about those "who foolish enough did not guard their full heart, and showed to the people their innermost part," and vowed solemnly, "from henceforth to leave the Sisyphus work of guiding a people to those who had not yet found out that the stone will sink to the bottom."

Thus he rushed through the darkness, without minding the crowd of people, who were still surging up and down the streets. He did not think of going home. His soul was yearning for liberty, as the hart panteth after the water-brooks; his head was nearly bursting with volcanic passions, and he longed to reach some Alpine height, to let his vexed soul expand once more in the sight of a boundless horizon, of something greater than this earth. What should he do at home? Return to the narrow, oppressive walls of his plain, unattractive house?—answer a thousand questions about the events of the evening, which he wished to forget as soon as he could?—afflict his wife by his bad temper and his violence? or see the children sleeping quietly in their little beds? The children! why were they born, born into a life which was to give them so little joy, so little satisfaction? To be sure, they did not seem to have their father's passionate soul; they showed, every one of them, an unmistakable resemblance to their mother in her quiet, submissive disposition—but even so! why were they born? what is the use or the meaning of a life which glides along like the peaceful brook meandering through rich pasture-lands? A life—well, a life like Clara's. And why was this gentle, peaceful, modest woman given to him, the wild, dissatisfied, restless man? And if she had only been happy! but she was not happy. Did she not always feel in her heart that she was not a suitable companion for her husband, not such a wife as he needed in his incessant struggles and conflicts? Had not this consciousness, like a hidden poison, broken her youthful vigor before the time? Could not every one read it distinctly in the painful expression that played around her lips, and in the downcast look of her eyes when she thought she was unobserved? Did she not rise with it in the morn-

ing, and lie down with it at night? Could he anticipate, when she, at eighteen years old, attracted him irresistibly, that the whirlpool of political agitation would so soon seize him and hurl him into fearful regions below, to which she, with her gentle heart, could not follow him? And ought he, for that reason, to gain the shore in safety, and from the snug harbor of domestic happiness look complacently at the labors, the struggles, and the dangers of his companions? Never! The man who feels within himself that he is called upon to work for great causes and to accomplish great things, has no right to shut himself up in the narrow cell of every-day life. The man who devotes his life to the people, cannot mind every cloud on his wife's brow. Not the happiness of his home, but the welfare of the State is his great task, and he must not seek his reward in the sweet smiles and the pleasing words of his wife, but in the applause of thousands, with which a grateful people accompanies its tribune on his way from the forum to the senate—a grateful people! These stupid, brutal fellows, who know not how to act like men, but only how to hoot and yell like boys! Yes indeed, indeed! Cry on! smash windows! and lie down at last with the happy conviction that you have accomplished heroic deeds; and when you awake in the morning with feelings of bitter repentance and a sense of your own wretchedness, you will return all the more patiently to the yoke!

Munzer had come—he did not know how, or why—into a street which was generally distinguished by its haughty, unbusiness-like quiet, but which to-night, like the side streets, was filled with crowds of noisy, half-drunk people. One of these crowds, which had probably originally consisted only of a few persons, but was now momentarily increasing with great rapidity, was whistling, yelling, and crying before a house, from which, through the partially open windows of the upper story, the dazzling light of many candles was falling upon the dark street. In the centre of the house a large glass door opened upon a balcony, supported by two elegantly carved pillars; and near the open door a piano seemed to stand, on which two admirably-trained hands performed a series of mad fortissimos and reckless capricios in unceasing exuberance. The louder and the more threatening the voices became below, the mightier and the more majestically

the notes sounded on the superb instrument upstairs ; and whenever there was a pause in the swearing and cursing below, teasing trills of provoking runs were heard above, as if a playful Ariel was mocking the rage of a Caliban.

Thus, at least, this strange concert appeared to the passionately excited man, who was now standing opposite the house, leaning against a garden wall. His sympathy was excited in a peculiar manner. He had often remarked the house in his wanderings through the city, for it differed very strikingly in its elegant form from the adjoining buildings ; and his fancy, always over active, had climbed with the creepers up the pillars of the balcony, had looked from the flowers there into aristocratic, quiet apartments, and had seen there beautiful forms, such as poets celebrate in graceful songs. He had purposely abstained from asking who owned the house, for he did not wish to have his illusions destroyed by learning perhaps that such and such a banker, or such and such a rich idler, was there resting on swelling divans, from the hard work of cutting off his coupons from countless bonds.

But the fingers which were now laughing and jesting on the keys of the piano did not belong to a hand accustomed to count out dirty money ; the person who could thus dare to defy the continually increasing wrath of an excited mob, was at least no ordinary being, and Munzer's knowledge of the human heart told him that only a woman was capable of such boldness in carrying out a caprice.

" Shall we allow ourselves to be fooled by these aristocrats ? " said a coarse, deep voice, quite near him.

" We'll show them who we are ! " cried another.

" These overbearing people burn more candles in one evening than we can afford to have all the year round, " screamed a female voice.

" Smash their windows ! We'll make some music now ! Smash the windows ! " cried the enraged people ; and between the cries the roulades were heard, and the playful trills more and more defying and irritating, as if the menacing voices of the rabble were the enthusiastic bravos of an electrified audience.

Suddenly a stone broke a pane, and instantly the music ceased ; a tall, womanly form, in a dark, flowing dress, ap

peared in the open glass door of the balcony, and remained standing there a few moments, perfectly calm, her arms folded over her bosom, as if she wished to let the riotous people below see at full leisure that they had to do with a lady. Then the figure disappeared again, and a moment after the runs began anew, and the trills danced more provokingly than ever.

This boldness, so far from checking the people, only fanned their wrath into a bright blaze.

“Hang the impudent aristocrat! Smash her windows, that the splinters fly around her head! Pull down the house!”

In an instant Munzer was across the street and on the uppermost step of the flight which led to the front door. For a moment he stood there, his hand on the door-knob, uncertain whether he should enter or not; but another glance at the crowd, which became more and more enraged, and he opened the door, which the servants, from cowardice or from confusion, had left unlocked, entered the house, hurried past several trembling figures in livery, up the soft carpeted staircase to the hall in the upper story, and opened a door, following the sound of the piano, which was still singing and trilling merrily.

A dazzling brightness of countless wax-candles on lustres and candelabras met him as he entered, almost too brilliant for him who came directly from the dim light of the street below. The sole occupant of the large, splendid apartment was the lady whom he had seen at the window. She sat, with her back to the door, still at the piano, and did not turn to the intruder, whose steps on the thick carpet she had probably not heard, as she was just then in the midst of a superb fortissimo, which her tapering, powerful fingers seemed to compel the piano to utter. The noise from below was at least equally deafening. The next moment Munzer was by her side, and now she raised her face towards him. Her hands remained listlessly on the keys; her large, brilliant brown eyes looked with astonishment rather than with fright at the noble pale face, surrounded by dark hair and beard, which suddenly, like a phantom, stared at her with a cry of terror and admiration strangely mixed.

But before she could open her lips to a single question,

Munzer had seized her beautiful hands, drawn her half by force from her seat at the piano, and led her further back into the room.

"Pardon me, madam!" he said, and his deep low voice trembled with excitement; "you are in much greater danger than you seem to think. Permit me, I pray, to say a few words to the rioters below from that balcony. I know no other way to save you!"

Without waiting for her answer, he turned from her, passed through the room, and stepped out on the balcony. It was high time. The rioters had armed themselves with bricks from a new building near by, and a coarse voice cried out: "All at once! One, two——"

"Stop!" cried Munzer, extending his right arm with a gesture of command. "Stop!"

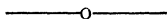
The unexpected appearance of the great man and his powerful voice made an impression on the crowd. They stood, with the bricks ready to be launched at the house, but not one dared to throw. Munzer did not give them time to recover from their astonishment.

"Are you free men?" he asked, "or are you liberated slaves, that you waste your strength uselessly in wanton rage and mad destruction? Are you strong only where you meet with no opposition? Is that your liberty, that you will not allow a man to live as he likes and as he may, if he does no harm to any one among you? Well! take your satisfaction; throw your bricks into a peaceful house! But I shall not leave this place, and if every one of you were to aim at me—at me alone!" The men below looked at each other in consternation, and let the raised arms drop. There were many among them who knew Munzer personally, and who had heard his words this very evening in the assembly. "That is Doctor Munzer!" it was whispered in the crowd; "a brave man—what Doctor Munzer says is so—he is the friend of the people. Three cheers for Doctor Munzer! Hurrah! and once more, hurrah!"

The fickle multitude joined merrily in the cry which had been raised only by a few men. The people evidently wanted nothing but a pretext for making a noise, and few of them cared whether they shouted for a man or against him, with a purpose or without one.

"I thank you!" said Munzer, with thinly-veiled irony; "but now do me the favor and go quietly home, everybody to his house. To-morrow is another day, and for to-day we have done enough and more than enough. Good-night!"

He beckoned with the hand, stepped back, closed the glass door, while the rabble outside cried: "Hurrah for Doctor Munzer! Hurrah! and once more hurrah!" and obeying his direction, and perhaps also tired of the noise, they threw away the bricks and moved down the street, some quietly and some shouting noisily.



CHAPTER XVI.

WHEN Munzer turned around, the lady was standing in the middle of the room. The bright light of the candles in the lustre fell upon her from the glossy black hair to the hem of her robe, which flowed in heavy folds from her slender waist far out on the rich carpet of the room. Munzer had been too excited before, to see more than that she was beautiful; he saw only now how very beautiful she was. To his experienced eye she looked perfect. He gazed at her as if intoxicated, as if blinded: at the glorious head, surrounded by soft curls in ambrosial fulness—at those large brown eyes, glancing forth gently and yet also boldly, with bewitching power, from under the dark lashes—at these features so pure and so delicate, as if formed by an artist's hand—and above all at those lips, those silent and yet eloquent lips, luscious, love breathing, and love inspiring. And like a flash of heavenly lightning, it fell upon the proud man, whose life had been tortured by his longing for the beautiful; and he felt, "This is the woman that is worthy of you; here you see the image that was silently floating through your dreams with veiled face, making your heart tremble with voluptuous anticipations; here she is in dazzling reality, glowing with life!" Was a similar revelation going on in the heart of the beautiful woman? Did the tall gloomy man with the proud, thought-

ful brow, above which the dark hair rose in defiant locks like a lion's mane, with the sorrowing eyes that were now flashing in fierce passion, did he look to her also like an embodiment of her ideal? It must have been so, for in her eyes also a fire shone—a fire sweet and terrifying like the frigid, bewitching glance of Medusa.

Thus they gazed at each other for a few seconds—a few fatal seconds.

All at once the beautiful woman laughed out loud, and said with a voice, the melodious sounds of which vibrated to Munzer's innermost soul: "Well, by heavens! this is strange! Here I sit awaiting my company, who apparently dare not leave their houses, and instead of my friends, whom I can spare, chance sends me a stranger, who suddenly enters, uninvited, like the marble statue in Don Giovanni, and as an introduction, prohibits my practice on the piano!"

"Which you may now resume, madam," replied Munzer; "I thought I was rendering you a service. Pardon me if in so doing I had to take the liberty of interrupting you."

He was going to pass her with a bow, and to leave the room. She quickly stepped back and thus stopped him:

"One moment, sir! Give me time at least to thank you for the service you have done me! No, no! You must accept my thanks. Now that my mad caprice no longer possesses me, I see very well that I once more exposed myself uselessly to great danger, and that even though I might not exactly have perished in it, I might yet have fared very badly. Did not the sweet rabble throw their cards nearly at my head?"

She touched contemptuously with the point of her foot a piece of a brick, which lay in the middle of the room. Then she laughed again with her low, melodious laugh, and said:

"No! This meeting is too strange! I believe I ought to let my marble guest depart again without asking his name, so that the odd finale should not lose its romance of secrecy; but we will not be romantic to-night, but for once show practical common sense; and as there is no one present to introduce us formally, we may as well perform the ceremony without a priest. My name is Antonia."

"And mine Bernhard," said Munzer, smiling.

"But I thought the people below called another name. Was it not Doctor Munzer?"

"Yes, but as you only mentioned your first name, I thought you did not attach any importance to the other."

"Oh!" said the lady; "with you men the name you receive at your birth has some importance; it is not so with us. What is the value of such a name, which they put upon us as a label is put on a bottle of wine, and which may be exchanged again for another, as the occasion offers? I only value the name by which I like to be called by those people who love me; the other name is perfectly indifferent. But if you wish to know it, it is Hohenstein: Baroness Antonia Hohenstein. Well, now the ceremony is performed, and as we are now regularly appointed acquaintances, we will assume that you alone of all my invited guests have come, and not trouble ourselves any further about the others who did not come. No, no objections, Doctor Bernhard Munzer! I admit no objections, least of all on the part of new acquaintances, who have to be trained at once to learn obedience. Put down that unlucky hat of yours, which you have worried out of all shape these five minutes! You are my guest, and a guest of too much delicacy, I am sure, to deny what I say before my own servants!"

She went, without waiting for Munzer's answer, to the bell-rope, rang the bell, and without looking at the servant who entered, ordered,

"Supper in the small supper-room for two! Be quick! Tell me when you are ready!"

"Yes, ma'am!" said the servant, leaving the room with a look of astonishment at Munzer.

"Well, now come," said Antonia; "put your hat down there! Good! Sit down in this arm-chair, or I shall never feel quite sure that you are really my guest. I will play something for you, if it can be done, for I think some of the strings must have broken."

She sat down again before the piano, while Munzer, in a state of confusion which almost deprived him of a will of his own, sank into the soft easy-chair. Her slender fingers ran up and down the key-board in a few brilliant runs.

"All right!" she cried; "now listen!"

She sounded a few full, powerful chords. Then she

wrought, out of tones which seemed to float through each other like drifting mists, a melody of a gloomy, melancholy character, full of earnest longing. Her improvisation followed the sensations which this air called forth, to the furthest distance, and yet ever returned to the original theme, which seemed to be in its yearning as unfathomable as the human heart.

Munzer listened with sweet shudders. He felt as if his soul was wandering in those regions which he knew to be its true home, but from which hard, pitiless, weary work had removed him further and further the older he grew. The sweet, magic land of romance opened before him with all its unspeakable, irresistible charms. He forgot where he was. He did not even see the beautiful woman on whose face his eye was fixed; he wandered about in cool forest shade, while female forms were silently hovering around him like delightful dream images, and smiled at him with their gentle, melancholy eyes, bewitching his senses. He heard the weaving and rushing of elementary powers; he felt as if his whole being was dissolved in forest peace and forest fragrance—as if he must exhale his soul in a kiss on the deadly fair lips of the Undine.

Then he heard, first from a far distance, and gradually nearer and nearer, a voice singing, luring and refreshing, like the sheen of the moon and the brightness of stars.

The voice paused; the last notes of the piano lost themselves trembling in the air. With a cry Munzer started up.

“Great God, what is the matter?” asked Antonia, rising suddenly.

But Munzer gave no answer. With long strides, pressing his hand on his heart, he walked to the further end of the room; then he turned again and went up to Antonia.

“What is the matter?” she exclaimed once more. “You look deadly pale; are you unwell?”

Munzer stopped before her, and looked at her with sombre eyes, glowing with wild passion. Then he passed his hand over his brow, like a man awaking from a dream, and said, breathing hard, and in a strange, far-off voice:

“Pardon me, madam! When you ended your song—you were singing a song, were you not?—I suddenly felt a sharp

pang just here in my heart. Now, it is all right again. Once more, I crave your pardon !”

“What is there to pardon ?” said Antonia, with a subtle smile ; “except perhaps that you did not hear my favorite ballad. ‘You were singing a song, were you not ?’—that is perfectly charming ! You are indeed the marble guest, and I shall begin in good earnest to be afraid of you. I am thankful that my good Jean is just coming there to tell us that supper is ready. Everything ready ? Very well ! You can go ! One thing more, Jean ; set matters right here ; and when you have done, put out the lights. You need not come till I ring.”

She put her hand lightly on Munzer’s arm and led him through a second room, in which also the candles were burning in the chandelier and before the pier-glasses, into a third apartment, which did not look upon the street. It was, therefore, somewhat less ornate, but all the more cozy, warmer and more fragrant—the very home of a lady who had made comfort a study. Thick carpets, which deadened the sound of the heaviest man’s tread, covered the floor. Thick curtains of dark-green damask hung before the doors and windows. From the ceiling a lamp was suspended, the soft light of which made the sofas and fauteuils look still more inviting in their darkened velvet, and seem to give life to the figures in the superb large engravings after Titian and Correggio on the walls ; and to the marble statuettes on the consoles and the mantel-piece. Immediately beneath the lamp a round table was set, resplendent with bright silver, delicate goblets, and sparkling crystal carafes filled with the blood of Burgundy grapes. At this table two large easy-chairs were placed at no great distance from each other, and Antonia beckoned her guest to take one of them, while she seated herself in the other.

Munzer cast a quick glance at the charming decorations of the room, but his eyes returned instinctively to Antonia, who appeared to him now very different from before—less magnificent, but all the more lovely and charming. The whole extraordinary situation in which he found himself of a sudden, had something of a dream, of a fairy story about it, which captivated his passionate soul with its eager thirst for something out of the common way. The abrupt

change of scenes which he had experienced to-night, the excessive mental wear and tear resulting from his efforts during several hours in the great meeting, the struggle of conflicting sentiments within him, and at last the sudden contact with this fairest of women—all this put him in a fever of excitement. And as in real fever our ideas of space and time are apt to become morbidly confused, so that what is great appears small to us, and what is small, great, he now felt as if all ordinary things were assuming a strange glamour, which made good things look bad, and bad things good, which gave a meaning to absurdity, and rendered common sense absurd, till at last life itself appeared but a dream, unworthy of being noticed. He declined by a mere gesture when Antonia offered him fruit and some biscuits, filled the beautiful glasses with purple wine, and said :

“Your health, fair lady ! Who could want earthly food at a moment when supreme beauty is revealed to him of a sudden ? Your health, fairest of ladies ! and oh, that this moment were the last of my life ! ”

He put the glass to his lips and eagerly drank the delicious beverage. His lips were burning, his heart was burning, and the fire of the generous wine fell like oil upon a bright blaze.

Antonia smiled as she looked upon her guest.

“Many thanks,” she replied, barely touching her glass, “and hearty returns. But why should you wish this moment to be the last of your life ? On the contrary, I do not wish so soon to lose the man who seems to me above all others worthy of the name. Come ! let me fill your glass once more, and let us drink our long—no ! not our long friendship ; for then we would be growing old and dull, and I hate old and dull people worse than death itself ! Well then, good friendship, as long as our path in life may be on the same road ! ”

“That would not be long, fair lady,” replied Munzer, resting his head in his hand and gazing at Antonia with burning eyes. “Our paths may at times cross each other, but only to diverge at once in different directions. You do not know who I am.”

“And do not desire to know it. What matter to me your rank or your profession ? I look for the man in the

man, and nothing more. Am I anything else but a woman, whom you see to-day for the first time, and whom—how do I know?—you may look upon as insane? Your name is Munzer; very well! It seems to me I have heard your name before—in political talk, I presume, to which I turn a deaf ear as soon as I find out what it is. It seems to me, also, they have called you in my presence, more than once, a republican, a rebel, a very dangerous man, who can do with the populace as he chooses. I am convinced you are that very monster, at whose whistling all the rats and mice come forth from their holes and nooks; or, as they did to-night, rush back and hide again in their nooks and holes. But what does that mean for me? I am not a politician. I look upon political talk as the greatest martyrdom to which a reasonable being can be subjected. I think our aristocrats are intolerable bores, our moneyed men repulsive, our good simple citizens awkward and coarse and very much to be avoided, and the sweet rabble very dirty, rude, and impudent. For which of these categories would you have me to be interested? Men as a whole are either unintelligible to me or contemptible in all their doings. I look for beauty, for wit, and for intelligence, only in the individual, and heaven knows how very rarely I find what I want! And you ought not to deny it: that is your experience also! You may ever so often try to persuade yourself that you really *love* the men for whom you plague yourself, and whom you pretend to respect—it is not so! I know, Doctor Munzer, you probably feel very little respect for me; you may even have asked yourself repeatedly during the last half hour whether you, as a man of the people, in the full consciousness of your lofty morality, and so forth, are not, strictly speaking, bound to despise me, the aristocrat, who minds so-called propriety so very little—you know, not in so many words, but something like that—and yet, and yet—now do please look at me for once a little less savagely—ah! that's it! a little more kindly—ah now! And yet I think you—would not be disinclined to commit an act of great folly for me, if I were malicious enough to ask anything of the kind of you!”

“You may be right, madam,” replied Munzer, whose looks were held by Antonia's eyes as if by a charm; “but

what would that prove? Do you know the old fairy tale of the Titans, who wanted to scale the heavens in order to forget their earthly sorrows at the golden table of the Immortals with Ambrosia and Nectar and the songs of Apollo and the Muses? They defended themselves, those envious, jealous gods, with their lightnings. They hurled the bold giants back upon the earth; for this—this flat miserable earth—is the real Tartarus, a genuine hell for a proud Titanic heart. Well now, fair lady, we men are the miserable descendants of those glorious fathers; and of care, anxiety, sickness, the daughters of the earth; and although the resemblance has been pretty nearly effaced by this time, we still have within us occasionally a faint remembrance of the blissful life where there is neither virtue nor vice, neither wisdom nor folly, but nothing but pure beauty, wonderful beauty, that charms the heart, intoxicates the senses, and lifts us up from this earth—and that remembrance we call Love. But you see, fairest of ladies, if that was not deemed good for the Titans, our fathers, it is much less wholesome for us, the sons of men. We must learn that the whole amount of happiness to be divided out among all mankind, is very small, and that each of us can only receive his fair share when everybody is contented with what is due to him, and does not claim more for himself than what he grants his neighbor. This view, which has to be carried out in deeds of humility and self-denial, we call Justice. You say: I do not love the men for whom I plague myself in weary, exhausting labor; and I am afraid you are right. I do not love them; on the contrary, I feel sometimes—I did so this very evening—as if I despised them downright; but I can still be just to him whom I do not esteem. But I cannot be so to you. What I feel when I think of you has nothing on earth to do with justice, esteem, or anything that is usually most regarded in the intercourse between man and man, and ought to be so regarded. For when I look at you, the wild, indomitable Titan nature awakes in me; because when I see you, when I hear the sweet tones of your voice, I forget that I have no claim to the supreme happiness of the gods; and thus you may be perfectly right when you say that I might commit a great folly for your sake—for instance, the enormous folly of loving you.”

Antonia leaned back in her chair, and her low, melodious laugh filled the whole room as with enchanting music. Then she bent forward again, resting her head on both hands, so that the slender fingers were half buried in her luxuriant hair, and said, looking steadily at Munzer :

"Did I not say so! I knew you were the oddest man my eyes have ever beheld. Who are you, sir, that you remind me of those proud, gigantic mountains, throned in solitude, around whose icy brows dark clouds are forever gathering, while their warm bosom is wrapped in green meadows and fragrant forests? I think you must be a king's son, who, driven from his throne, has in his fierce wrath gone among the people, and now arouses the people to rebellion against the usurper! For you are not of the people! Men from below have not such small, aristocratic hands, and above all, not such haughty, imperious eyes. You ought to confess it! No one can hear us here, and I will not betray you. Where is your kingdom? and who are your royal parents?"

"You mock me!" replied Munzer, with a melancholy smile. "I cannot blame you for it. You have cause enough. You wish to know where my kingdom is? Here, behind this brow, between the narrow walls of this head! And who are my royal parents? Poor peasant people, who wasted their sad lives under the burden of heavy baskets, in which they carried earth up to the narrow terraces of a slate mountain, where every two or three years they reaped a pitiful harvest of grapes. The toys they put into my aristocratic hands, were a spade and a hoe; my playmates were half-wild goats browsing on the coarse grass of rocky heights; my court-musicians, the falcon, who in summer drew his wide circles in the blue air above my head, and in winter the wolves, who howled at night around our hut as it lay half buried in snow. My royal parents died of misery and sorrow; and I, their only princely son, would have perished likewise of misery and hunger, if the priest in the nearest village—the only true priest I have ever known—had not taken pity on the poor, ragged orphan, and shared with him his pittance of daily bread and of precious knowledge. When he had taught me all he knew, he sent me to school here in town; and the blessing with which he dis-

missed me, said: 'I should fare well and be happy as long as I was diligent and pious.' But it is pretty hard to remain pious in a garret, with the wintry wind blowing through all the cracks and crevices. One can be industrious, though, very industrious, and thus I said good-by to piety, and gave myself up to diligence—not from love of knowledge, but from ambition—burning, consuming ambition—which enabled me to bear, with stoic indifference, hunger and cold, and the scorn of my schoolmates. For they did scorn me, these elegant children of noblemen, these well-fed sons of rich merchants. They called me the Eifel-wolf, because I looked so haggard and hollow-eyed, and my clothes were so ragged and patched. And, by heavens! they were not far out of the way, the thoughtless scoffers! I felt at times wolfish enough in my heart. Society appeared to me often like a big, fat, stupid flock of sheep, and I hated the flock with grim, hungry, wolfish hatred. I wanted to be immensely learned, to be omniscient, in order to have in my knowledge the power to avenge myself on men for their scoffing and scorning. I invoked the devil a hundred times, offering him my soul. But the devil did not come, which at last made me think that there was probably no devil at all. But was there really a God whom we could make responsible for the fearful ways of men upon earth?

"And as I went on in this direction, I arrived at entirely new and unexpected results. I said that if men are so bad by their own will, they ought also to be able to be good by their own will; and if that was not so, the cause must be looked for in some secret disease, in great and general defects in our social system, for which men as a whole might be responsible, but not the individual, who unwittingly and unwillingly shared in the universal suffering. In passionate souls like mine, extremes meet; and as others, in the poet's words, 'Drink hatred of men in the fulness of love,' I drank love of humanity in the fulness of my hatred. But my power was feeble, and my love but a shadow, for it did not come from the heart, only from the head; because I simply felt that we ought not to despise men on account of their defects any more than we despise cripples and lepers on account of their fearful afflictions. My sympathy with men was the interest of the physician in his patient. I

helped and comforted where I could ; I gave to the poor all I could give. My heart had nothing to do with all that ; it was dead and empty within me ; dead and empty !”

Munzer sighed deeply and emptied his glass. Antonia filled it again, and then placing her hand lightly on his arm for a moment, she said,

“Poor, poor man !”

“Yes indeed !” said Munzer ; “poor man ! for who is poorer than a lonely man ? and I was lonely among all the men around me, lonely and forsaken, like the shipwrecked sailor on Salas y Gomez ; and as that unfortunate man in his despair yielded to his fate in quiet and patient resignation, I also gave up all joy and happiness in life. I saw clearly what was my task in life, and that was enough. To reconcile men with each other, rich and poor, great and small, learned and unlearned, and to make the common good of all what is now the exclusive property of a few—that was my purpose. This greatest and noblest of all works, I proposed to assume as my own ; to it I meant to devote the whole power of my head and my heart, and without hope of reward or gratitude. I asked for nothing more for myself than what is given to all mankind. I asked for no especial privilege, not even the sad right to be alone with my grief, not even the dreams of lofty love high as the stars in heaven, which sometimes, in silent nights, floated like the sounds of æolian harps through my weary and lonely soul, and intoxicated it with sweet images. I meant to have a wife and children, like everybody else, hoping thus to be freed from the oppressive fear lest without them the dark path in which I was wandering through life might lead me sooner or later to insanity or to suicide.”

Munzer paused. Never in his life had he spoken so freely and unreservedly about himself, and the consciousness of his grief overcame him with irresistible force. His heart was heavy, like that of an innocent prisoner before his execution ; his eyes burnt as if with the effort to check a flood of tears. He looked in pain and fear at Antonia, as if comfort and help must come from her.

“And—you have a wife and children ?” asked Antonia, after a pause.

“I have a wife, a faithful wife, and it would have been better for her to have died before she ever saw me. I have

children, lovely, hearty children, and it would be better they had never been born. I have not the talent to be happy, but I have a perfect genius for making others wretched!"

Munzer started up and walked with long strides up and down the room. Suddenly he paused before Antonia, who had sunk back in her chair, covering her eyes with her hands, and said, almost through his teeth:

"Woe to you if our paths in life should meet again and again! Woe to you and to me! I should throw a fire-brand into your life, which would seize and consume you in spite of all the resistance you could make. And you, you could not make me happy; you could only make me more unhappy than I am, if that were possible. I should finish the enchanting dream, and awaking, resume the work to which I have devoted myself with a sacred vow; and if I then should feel that I have no longer the strength to wield the axe in the original forest of error—if I should feel that the wanton desire to feast at the table of the gods had brought me nothing but shame and disgrace, then——"

"Well then?" said Antonia, with pale lips; "speak out! what then?"

"Then," cried Munzer, throwing himself at Antonia's feet, and seizing both of her hands; "then I should hate you, beautiful woman, as I had loved you with all the fire of my heart."

Antonia had turned still paler, her breath came and went, her features trembled, and her large brown eyes shone with a strange fire. She drew her hand from Munzer's hands, placed them upon his shoulders, as he still knelt before her, and drawing him close to her, so that their lips almost touched, she whispered:

"And if you were to hate me, proud man, and if you were to kill me because you had loved me, because I had loved you, I will yet love you, and you shall yet love me."

She threw her arms around his neck, and let him press his lips on hers in a long, burning kiss.

Steps were heard on the varnished floor of the ante-room. Antonia started; Munzer rose instantly, and looked at the door, which opened suddenly.

"Colonel Baron Hohenstein!" said the servant, and a slight malicious smile made his eyes twinkle. Before An-

tonia could reply a word, the colonel had already entered the room. The malicious servant closed the door behind him.

The colonel was hardly less surprised when he saw the well-known demagogue here, in the rooms of his sister-in-law, than Antonia and Munzer were by his sudden appearance. His first thought was, Munzer's presence might have some connection with the business which brought him here ; but at once his sharp eyes noticed the peculiar expression on their faces. Besides, he had evidently interrupted a very pleasant *tête-a-tête* ; and the malignant smile of the servant who had ushered him in, and the unfortunate reputation of unwarrantable recklessness and almost undisguised profligacy which his sister-in-law had—all this was not at once present to the colonel's mind ; but as much as he could on the instant take in of it all, was enough to fill his revengeful heart with mad jealousy.

"Pardon me, dearest Antonia," he said, casting a dark glance at Munzer, "if I interrupt you. I could not come sooner, as we had orders to remain in barracks until now. When I left the barracks, I heard that there had been a riot here in this street, and before your house. I hastened up and found the front rooms all dark, but the front door not even closed, and your Jean told me you had company upstairs. Once more I beg your pardon if you did not expect a visit from me this evening."

Antonia had recovered herself during the colonel's somewhat formal speech.

"I had indeed not expected you here to-night," she said, with icy coldness. "While you were keeping your soldiers safe in their barracks, they have broken my windows here ; and you would, after all, have come too late with your regiment—with less than a regiment you would surely not have ventured out?—if this gentleman had not been kind enough to send the people to their homes. Will the gentlemen permit me to——"

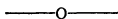
"I have already had an opportunity to make Doctor Munzer's acquaintance," said the colonel, with a most formal bow, which Doctor Munzer returned as formally.

"Permit me, madam, to say good-by," said Munzer, turning from the colonel to Antonia ; "I have already consumed too much of your valuable time,"

Antonia was about to say something in order to induce Munzer to remain, but a look at his eyes told her that it would be in vain. She turned, therefore, with a sudden resolution, rang violently, and said to the servant, who appeared almost instantly :

"Light Doctor Munzer to the door!" and then to Munzer, giving him her hand: "*Au revoir*, doctor! I hope I shall soon have the pleasure!"

Munzer drew the beautiful hand, which rested an instant in his own, to his lips, bowed once more slightly to the colonel, who watched the leave-taking with staring eyes, as if he would not trust his senses, and followed the servant out of the room.



CHAPTER XVII.

THE door had hardly closed again, when the colonel, starting from his icy rigidity, walked up to Antonia, and asked her fiercely :

"What does that mean, Antonia?"

Antonia crossed her arms on her bosom, and replied in a tone of freezing coldness, which contrasted very strangely with the fire in her eyes :

"I believe I have rather a right to ask what it means, that you dare speak to me in such a tone!"

The colonel had no reason to seek a quarrel with his sister-in-law; but his wrath got the better of his prudence, and he answered violently :

"It is unheard of, it is a real scandal, that you, Antonia Hohenstein, should dare to receive at your house a man of such bad reputation. You have taken liberties enough in your life, but will you go beyond all limits? Are the people to point at you with the finger openly, as they now shrug their shoulders at you behind your back?"

The hoarse voice of the colonel had become still rougher and hoarser as he said these words. He threw his helmet on a chair (from which it rolled on the carpet), and ran up and down like a wild beast, with fury in his eyes.

Antonia had not changed her position, and the tone of her voice was, if possible, still icier, as she said :

"If I did not know, *mon cher*, that in moments like the present it is rather jealousy than any other feeling which makes you speak so, I should certainly tell the servants to show you out. As it is, I can only tell you : pick up your helmet, which you have thrown down in utter disregard of the national colors it displays, and go quietly home. When I may have the honor of seeing you again, will depend entirely on my remembering to-morrow at breakfast what you have said and what you have done just now. I hope I shall have forgotten it. Until then farewell !"

"Pardon me, Antonia," said the colonel, who felt that he had gone too far, and ought to make his peace in time. "I was beside myself, seeing here this man whom I cannot endure. You do not know, or you have forgotten, that this is the same man who, two years ago, when we had the great riot here, organized the national guard with their white bands around the arm—the ragged guard, we called it—and by his writings and his speeches did everything in his power to throw the blame upon us, and especially upon myself."

"Ah indeed !" said Antonia. "I did not think of that. Ah ! that was Doctor Munzer ? You say he was implicated ?"

"Yes ; that is to say, not directly," replied the colonel, picking up his helmet and putting it on a console ; "not directly, but he afterwards became mixed up with it, as he always meddles with things that do not concern him, and appeared as a sort of advocate of the rabble, upon whom I had been forced to give orders to fire. It was he who induced the magistrates to form a commission of inquiry, which was to take evidence ; and although the commission was suppressed by order of government, and the whole question was summarily dismissed, he was, after all, the cause that I received a severe reprimand from the commander-in-chief, a thing I am not going to forget very soon, I assure you."

"But, if I am not mistaken, you told me at that time it was your brother Arthur who got you into the trouble," said Antonia, who had seated herself, and beckoned the colonel to take a seat by her.

"My amiable brother Arthur had his share in the

matter," replied the colonel; "for in those days the alderman was still a liberal; while quite recently, I am told, he has changed his flag, and is now very conservative. Who knows, perhaps Mr. Munzer also will follow his example, and is only waiting for government to offer him a good price. Believe me, Antonia, these men are capable of everything, if one only knows how to find out their weak points: that is, to give them as much money as they want. Why, I am almost inclined to think I am on the track of an abominable plot, in which my amiable brother, this nice Doctor Munzer, and excellent Peter Schmitz, that dog of a republican, are all involved together."

"You make me quite curious," said Antonia; "won't you take a glass of wine?"

"Thanks!" said the colonel. "I know and I have always said you are an angel, although you like at times, as just now, to put a little devil's mask before your pretty face. Since you are disposed to be gracious, pray let me lay aside my sword also. Famous Burgundy! Chambertin? Year forty-six? And you could give such wine to a man who had rescued you from the very rabble whom he had first himself incited against you? *Sacre!* I wish I could have been here with half a company of my men, I would have made a nice pie of the rascals!"

"How was that about the plot you said you had found out?"

"I will tell you directly; for, after all, that was, next to my desire to see you, adored Antonia,"—the colonel bowed most gallantly—"the principal reason for my presenting myself here at so late an hour. I told you, I think, that Arthur—heaven knows by what tricks—has been reinstated in favor with the old sinner at Rheinfeld, and that the old man, who I think must be nearly fit for an asylum, has taken a violent fancy to that fool, Wolfgang. The boy is still at this moment with stupid Clotilda and her half-grown daughter Camilla, on a visit at Castle Rheinfeld; and Selma insists upon it, the plan is that the two young people are to marry each other, and to be the old man's heirs. You can imagine that Selma, in her amiable manner, dins the thing in my ears all day long, and I cannot deny that I do not like the look of things myself very much. You know, that if we

miss that legacy, I am a ruined man. So far, I have not troubled myself much about it, and have been content to think that the old man is the greatest rascal alive, and really has no good will for anybody on earth ; so that Master Wolfgang also will be sent home sooner or later with a flea in his ear. But since this morning the matter has become more serious. This morning early, just as I was riding up to the barracks, the old man sends me a letter—I think it is the second letter I have ever received from him in my life—in which he says—I have the stuff here, just listen and tell me yourself if the devil is not master of the old man in good earnest: ‘My dear Nephew Gisbert ! I find that my grandnephew, Wolfgang, who is at this moment staying with me, is a very charming and gentlemanly young man, who deserves, at least as well as your boys, to wear the king’s colors ; therefore I desire him to become an officer in the army, as I have been, and as all the Hohensteins have been, with a few exceptions, which I neither relish nor admire ; therefore, I desire you to arrange the matter as well as you can—namely, to take the boy into your regiment, whereas my father and my grandfather have both been in the same regiment, and whereas the boy, as above mentioned, is a true and genuine gentleman, such as no commander need be ashamed of. In return, I am willing, if you should wish it particularly, to give you a thousand or so, *nota bene*, if you fulfil the wish of your affectionate uncle, Eberhard Baron Hohenstein, lieutenant-general, etc. P. S.—I have said nothing as yet to the boy, because I shall wait for your answer, which is expected by return mail by the above.’

“What do you say to that?” asked the colonel, crushing the letter and putting it in his pocket. “Is not that enough to make a man mad? I am to take the boy in my regiment—a boy whose mother is a grocer’s daughter, or some such thing, whom my wild brother has been compelled to marry for good reasons, and for whose sake he has broken with the whole family!—a boy who may rob us of the whole property right before our noses ! Does not that look like genuine irony? It makes me mad to think of it.”

“Why don’t you tell the general that you are not willing? That would settle the matter at once !”

“Not exactly,” replied the colonel, with a grim smile.

"In the first place it must be remembered that the old sinner has still friends in the army, and can easily find some other commander of a regiment who is less scrupulous than I am ; so that my refusal does not help the matter. Then I have no reason to make the old man still more angry with me than he is already. The devil knows why, but he has for some time been exceedingly rude to me, to Selma, and even to my boys. And in the third place——" the colonel blushed slightly, and cast a sharp glance at Antonia, who sat thoughtfully in her arm-chair opposite to him, resting her head on her hand.

"And in the third place," he continued, slowly, "the old man has with his usual sagacity baited his hook well. I must confess that that bait has at this moment very peculiar attractions for me. To speak frankly, I am terribly in need of money, and I do not know where it is to come from. My ordinary resources are all exhausted and ——"

"Then you had better do what granduncle wants," said Antonia, "since it is of no use to you to refuse his offer. You would be very unwise not to take the money."

The colonel had evidently expected a very different reply when Antonia began, and he replied, therefore, angrily :

"You can talk easily. We do not like to sell our principles and our convictions for a few miserable dollars."

"A thousand dollars is a nice sum," said Antonia, shrugging her shoulders ; "but what has all that to do with Doctor Munzer ? And where is the plot you spoke of just now ? I see no plot."

"I cannot show you the plot in black and white," growled the colonel. "I only have my suspicions ; and as far as I know the rascals, the thing is plausible enough. I heard quite accidentally that this Master Wolfgang is an intimate friend of your Doctor Munzer, by whom he was taught French, and with French probably also all his communistic abominations."

"You don't say so ! Handsome Master Wolfgang a friend of Doctor Munzer ? Now the story becomes downright interesting ! Tell me more about it !"

"You seem indeed to take a lively interest in this man Munzer," said the colonel, with a grin which he intended for a smile.

"So I do," replied Antonia, laughing merrily. "The man seems to have something to do with everything that is going on. The Count of St. Germain, with his omnipresence, is nothing in comparison. I told him this evening that I thought he must be a prince in disguise, who plays the republican to pass his time. But I do not see the plot yet! Colonel Baron Hohenstein, you owe me still a plot!"

The colonel evidently did not relish the lady's joke. He sipped his wine angrily, and said:

"Well, it is at least possible that Arthur, his brother-in-law Schmitz, and this Doctor Munzer, may have hatched out a plan to win the old man's favor by fair means or by foul means for this youth Wolfgang. How can we know what they told the boy to say and to do at Rheinfeld? This plan of making an officer of him may have been cunningly suggested to the general. I have been told, this Peter Schmitz is still an ardent admirer of his sister, the alderman's wife. Might he not desire to push his sister's son? And Munzer, again, is an intimate friend of this Schmitz; and the two are working hand in hand, I am sure, with Arthur. If Arthur all of a sudden becomes an ultra conservative, you may be sure he does so in order to flatter the old man at Rheinfeld, and secondly to open a way for his accomplices. If Wolfgang is once the acknowledged heir to the old man, you will see how promptly his uncle Schmitz and his friend Munzer will change flags, especially if government should help the matter a little by granting some privilege or other to Schmitz, and by making Munzer a professor or something of the kind, with a good income."

"*Mon Dieu!* How fearful that sounds!" exclaimed Antonia, smiling. "I begin to think this man Munzer must be an extremely dangerous man. I should really not wonder, now, if it turned out that he had arranged the riot before my house on purpose, so as to have an opportunity for introducing himself, and for involving me too, heaven knows how, in this great and terrible conspiracy."

"You may laugh as you choose," said the colonel, angrily, rising, putting on his sword, and seizing the helmet; "but I do not feel like laughing at all, I assure you. I thought that even if I had to give up all hope of ever making an impression on your fickle heart, you would at least be a friend

of mine ; but I see I am disappointed in that also. Good-by ! After what has happened this evening, I shall look forward more calmly to your promise to be friends again. But I tell you this"—and at these words the colonel's little eyes literally sparkled with burning jealousy—"If you should try, for the sake of variety, a little friendship with Munzer, I give you my word of honor that my name shall no longer be Gisbert Hohenstein, if I do not run my sword right through the fellow the first opportunity I have !"

"Or send a battalion of infantry after him if I should not be able to manage him alone ! Oh, dear colonel, you are, upon my word, too funny to-night ! I won't be angry any more about you, but please just look into the looking-glass for a moment and see if you don't make the funniest face that was ever seen ?"

And Antonia threw herself into her fauteuil and laughed most immoderately. "Good-night," said the colonel, curtly and sharply ; "you may laugh, but you must laugh alone. I do not mean to be fooled by any one, not even by you."

"Good-night, brother-in-law Othello ; good-night, my disinterested friend !" cried Antonia, offering him her hand, but the colonel turned from her and hastily left the room, slamming the door violently.

Antonia's laugh ceased the moment he had left the room. Her beautiful face assumed an air of serious, almost painful meditation. A crowd of varied emotions passed over her features ; once she smiled as in blissful remembrance of a delightfully sweet moment ; then again she fell back into sombre brooding.

"He is handsome," she murmured ; "oh, so handsome ! If he were mine, he would be something very different from—one more ! Why not ? He is a married man ! Pshaw ! He does not look as if that would be much of an impediment. But he is an idealist, and such people take everything so much in earnest, not comically like my brave colonel, but in that terribly earnest way which is so desperately embarrassing. How was it with Castruccio in Rome ? Poor boy ! You might still be living happily, kissing pretty girls and painting beautiful pictures ! I could not help it ! I had told you often enough, but you would not believe me—I could not help it ! I cannot be faithful ! Not to such men !

They do not deserve it. I wonder if this man Munzer could really hold me? Perhaps he could hold me longer than I could hold him? It might be worth trying—and we were beginning so nicely. Why must that brute Gisbert come in—and that stupid Jean? Ah yes! that must be settled to-night at once. To-morrow I might have forgotten it, or I might not be in the right humor.”

She rang the bell.

A few moments afterwards the servant entered the room. The man probably had a bad conscience; he cast a quick, watchful glance at his mistress, and said in a humble, servile tone:

“Did you ring, ma’am?”

“You will pack your things to-morrow. I have no use for servants whom I cannot trust absolutely. You can go. Send me Eliza!”

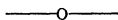
The man’s pale face had turned still paler.

“But ma’am——” he stammered.

“What I have said, I have said,” said Antonia, sharply. “Go!”

The servant went out without venturing to say a word in reply.

“One more slanderer I send out into the world,” said Antonia, throwing herself into her chair. “What does it matter? The more they tell about me, the less will be believed. Ah! there you are, Eliza!”



CHAPTER XVIII.

WHILE the people of the town, greatly excited and seemingly impelled by demons, burdened their consciences with such deeds of violence, Wolfgang was riding through the delicious night in a frame of mind hardly less excited, but as much purer and holier as the fragrant breath of evening, passing over corn-fields and vineyards, is fresher and healthier than the thick steam in the narrow streets of an over-crowded city with its confined, mediæval masses of buildings.

The road followed almost constantly the banks of the river in all its capricious turns and windings. From the lack of gravel it was very sandy after the long-continued drought, and in spite of Moss's good-will and the honest efforts of his stout, raw-boned horses, the carriage proceeded but very slowly—far too slowly for poor impatient Wolfgang. In his desire to reach town he envied the water-fowls whom the rattling carriage startled here and there from the reeds near the shore, and who now darted with marvellous swiftness across the moonlit, mirror-like surface of the river towards the opposite bank. His anxiety about his mother's condition, which at first had filled his soul almost entirely, had gradually subsided under the influence of calmer reflection. Wolfgang recalled to his mind that his mother had been quite frequently subjected to similar attacks of extraordinarily violent pain, arising from neuralgia, and that she often wandered in her mind on such occasions. He himself had sat for long hours by her bedside, holding his hand on her burning forehead, while the low moans of the poor sufferer were tearing his heart, and he would have willingly given years of his life if he could thus have purchased one hour's painless rest for his mother. Why should this attack be more serious than the former? And then, would his father have been able to go to the meeting of the City Council if he had had any doubts as to the nature of the attack? Wolfgang had not always been in full sympathy with his father; he had, to his great pain, observed many evidences of a cold, heartless, and egotistical disposition; but, as long as he could remember, his father had never once shown this dark side of his character in his relations to his mother; he had invariably been attentive to her and full of genuine sympathy. This had struck the young man especially when he had been recently summoned home by a hurried message, and his father had told him on his arrival, in a state of great excitement, that he had received an invitation to Rheinfeld for himself, his mother, and Wolfgang. He had never yet seen his father so cheerful, though cheerful was not exactly the right word either for a state of mind so excited that it became almost painful to the calm observer. The most extravagant hopes his father built on the impending interview; he praised his good luck, "that the old man had

come to his senses at the last hour." Now, he thought, men of his own rank would no longer look upon him askant. And then, he might surely count upon it, that the general, after proclaiming thus publicly his reconciliation with his long misjudged nephew in the presence of the whole family, would certainly include him among his other relatives when making his last will! In fact, who could tell but he might provide for him more abundantly than for the others, of whom he was heartily tired!—why else should he suddenly remember those whom he seemed to have forgotten for more than twenty years?

"I think, my boy," he had said, patting Wolfgang on the shoulders; "I think this visit will be of some advantage to you. If I had known five years ago that things would turn out thus, I should never have allowed you to choose that miserable profession, the law, which at best leads to but very little—an unpaid assistant-judge, or something of the kind, for half your life. What is that? I wish you had entered the army! That is, after all, the only proper profession for a nobleman. What do you think, Margie?"

The mother had smiled sweetly, and said in her gentle voice: "I am content if you are—and Wolf!" she had quickly added, seizing her son's hand and pressing it cordially.

Wolfgang, however, had not smiled; for the manner in which his father had looked at the whole affair, was exceedingly displeasing to him. His father's sudden appreciation of a rank which he had always seemed to value very little, appeared strange to him. It agreed so little with the impressions he had gained in childhood, and with the independent views which he had since learned to entertain. And then his finer sensibilities were offended by the low avarice which appeared so undisguised in his father's words. Was it always money that decided everything? If his father was glad to be again admitted to that society to which the memory of his youth very naturally bound him, Wolfgang could not share his father's gladness, but he could at least understand the feeling. But to see how anxious his father was about the probable duration of the old general's life—to hear him recall, apparently, with considerable satisfaction, that already twenty years ago the doctors had declared an

affection of the throat incurable, to say nothing of gout and rheumatism—that was beyond Wolfgang. He could not reconcile it with his high notions of self-respect and dignity. The whole journey to Rheinfeld appeared to him like a piratical expedition, like a barefaced, shameless attack upon the rich testator; and he would gladly have been excused, especially as he could not imagine the meeting with his relations to be anything but a very painful scene for his mother and for himself. Did he not pass his uncles and aunts in the street without being noticed?—perhaps without being known to them? Did not even his cousins, Lieutenant Cuno and Ensign Odo, who had been with him at the same school, though not in the same class, pretend not to know him any longer. If there had been a possibility of escaping from the visit to Rheinfeld, Wolfgang would have joyfully seized any pretext, and might very possibly have refused to obey his father's order, if his mother had not been present—his dear, sweet mother, who met his father's wishes with such devotion and cheerful self-denial.

That had happened a week ago, and now there seemed to be an eternity between to-day and then! How much he had experienced since that day! And while so little had happened externally, what changes had taken place within! Where was now the repugnance he had formerly felt at the mere thought of coming into nearer contact with his relatives? Where his resolutions to decline, with cold politeness, any such approach, even if they should be the first to make it? Instead of this he had actually taken pains, in his frequent interviews with his granduncle, to win over the choleric old man, whose original way of thinking and whose strangely antiquated manner of speech had invested him with a kind of historical interest, and to make him think better of himself and his father and mother. He had been very glad when he succeeded, and thought he noticed that the eccentric, misanthropic cynic became somewhat milder and more humane in his society. He had actually been enthusiastic in his hopes of converting the gray-haired egotist just on the brink of the grave, to the religion of humanity! And had he been any less eager to win favor with his aunt? Had he not listened attentively to her sentimental platitudes? Had he not always entered most readily upon her

senseless gossip? Had he not gratefully kissed her hand one afternoon in the park when she had said she was so sorry, so very sorry, not to have made long ago the acquaintance of his beautiful, gentle mother, but that she would try to make up for lost time as well as she could, for such a friend she had wanted all her life! And now, finally, had not Camilla's smile driven away the last cloud of indignation from his brow? Had not her kisses silenced the bitter words he used to hold ready for his relatives, forever and forever? Camilla! Camilla! Yes, he had passed the line which heretofore bounded his life, and now other and fairer stars were shining for him. Until a few days ago—nay a few hours ago—he had known nothing of happiness and enjoyment, of all that can charm the heart of man—nothing more at least than the northerner knows of the glorious splendor with which the southern sun adorns sea, earth, and heavens. No, it cannot be the fate of man to spend his life mournfully in meditative gloom, like his high-toned, unhappy friend Munzer, or that strange saint in his melancholy tower. There must be a love among men which is joyful—a love of liberty, which is not afraid of the beautiful. What would his mother say when she heard it all? But if she should be really sick, sick unto death, where would then be all his happiness and joy? What would then be beautiful and attractive any longer upon earth?

Wolfgang started suddenly from his dreams, which had kept his mind captive, wearied as it was by so many and so powerful impressions. As before, the tired horses were dragging the heavy carriage slowly through the deep sand; as before, the waters glittered on his right, in the rays of the moon; as before, Moss sat bending forward in the corner of his seat, mute and motionless as a dead man.

"How far are we now, Moss?" asked Wolfgang.

"Half way," growled Moss, without changing his position.

"Another half-hour, then, before we reach the turnpike!" cried Wolfgang, impatiently; "why, we do not go on at all!"

Moss whistled a few long-drawn notes. On every other occasion that would have been his only answer to the questions of an impatient passenger; but poor Wolfgang's state of mind seemed to him to deserve special consideration. Turning his head slightly, therefore, he growled, "Sand is sand!"

"Certainly, my dear Moss," said Wolfgang, knowing well the man's strange manner of expressing himself. "I only wished you to drive as fast as you possibly can."

Moss whistled a few bars of "I had a comrade in the war," which was as much as to say, "I know what is my duty, and I mean to do it!" and then he suddenly broke off, as if he had expressed his opinion clearly enough.

Wolfgang could not long endure the painful silence, which affected his excited nerves.

"Moss," he said, "have you lately seen my mother?"

"Yes," said Moss.

"And did she look well?"

"Well!"

"Do you mean No?"

"Harness wrong!"

"What does that mean?" asked Wolfgang, strangely touched by this expression.

Moss turned half round, as a sign that he intended to exhaust the subject in question, and said:

"Hohensteins are Hohensteins."

"That means, dear Moss?"

"Good for nothing."

"A nice compliment for one who is a Hohenstein."

"Nobles are nobles."

"That means?"

The old driver had turned again to his horses and made no reply. Wolfgang did not like to repeat his question, especially as they now turned from the by-road into the turn-pike, and with the quicker motion his desire to get home as soon as possible became stronger again. The trees by the wayside passed by slowly. Wolfgang felt as if the journey was endless. They passed a village; in almost all the houses lights were still burning; at the inn there was much life and excitement. As the carriage passed swiftly, the guests rushed to the doors and windows. Wolfgang heard them cry out, "They are coming!" and then again, "It is only a carriage!" He did not know what it meant. Close behind the village they met a procession crossing the turn-pike: "Holy Virgin, pray for us! Holy Sebastian, pray for us!" This delayed them several minutes. Scarcely had they started once more, when a low thundering noise, which

made the earth tremble, fell upon Wolfgang's ear. The thunder came nearer; the tremor increased; a horseman at full speed came galloping forward. "Make room! Make room!" The next moment several guns came dashing by; the moonlight was glistening on the bright brass and on the arms of the horsemen; the drivers whipped their foaming horses furiously; an officer who rode by their side checked his horse but just in time before Wolfgang's carriage, and cried furiously, "Curse you! why don't you keep out of the way!" and the wild band had passed by before old Moss could quiet his frightened horses again.

"What does that mean?" asked Wolfgang, amazed.

"Soldiers are soldiers," growled Moss.

A horseman came trotting along. It was the surgeon, whose horse was less accustomed to such furious speed. Wolfgang stopped him. "Pray, sir, can you tell us what this means? Has anything happened in town?"

The surgeon, a tall, thin man, replied in a snarling, ill-tempered voice: "What it means? False alarms, like every day! Six times every twenty-four hours orders and counter orders; if the captain had only waited a few minutes, the march would have been countermanded. They want to give us a bit of pleasant country life. All the villages occupied by troops just as they lard a hare. The peasants are to find out how happy they are living in a kingdom that is always under arms. Come Lizzie, a short gallop, or we shall both be in the guard-house. Good-by, sir."

The doctor gave his horse the spurs and galloped away.

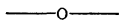
"Drive on, Moss," Wolfgang said. "For heaven's sake, drive on!"

Moss whistled, and the wearied horses, who no doubt longed for their comfortable stables, trotted a little faster, fortunately for Wolfgang, whose restlessness had been increased by this new episode. He leaned back on his seat and wrapped himself closer in his overcoat. His excitement, and perhaps also the cold of the night, which began to be severe, shook him like an attack of fever; his hands were icy cold, but his forehead burned. His overheated brain was crowded with fantastic visions. He saw tumultuous crowds surge through the streets; he thought he heard the ringing of bells and the rattling of small guns. Then

again he saw his mother lying on her bed, tortured by her pains ; then the old general pushed his bald head between them, laughing hoarsely ; and then Camilla was clinging to him amid kisses and caresses, and suddenly tore herself from him, as somebody from the château called his name.

Wolfgang started. He must have fallen asleep from sheer fatigue, for, without his knowing how they had come there, the carriage was rattling over the drawbridge, and stopped at the guard-house.

“ Pass on ! ” Wolfgang heard a squeaking voice say. He thought he had seen for an instant his cousin Cuno’s face, but he might have been mistaken. The carriage rumbled through the long dark passage till the sergeant opened the two massive gates, and then into the moonlit streets. Brilliantly-lighted windows flitted by him ; noisy crowds rushed tumultuously through the streets, and scattered when a patrol came marching up at double quick. And now a more quiet street, the street in which the house of his parents was. The grocery store of the neighbor, in the door the owner with his two apprentices and the servant maid, all looking full of curiosity and anxiety after the “ riot,” and then the carriage stopped before the large dark house. Wolfgang looked up. Only two windows in the upper story were dimly lighted ; they were the windows of the sitting-room which opened into his mother’s chamber. With one leap he was at the door. It was not locked. In the hall a lamp was burning under the glass shade that hung from the ceiling. He hastened up the broad silent staircase, and stood drawing a long breath before the door of the sitting-room. His heart beat as if it would burst. What was lying behind the thin and yet impenetrable veil of the next moment?—life or death?



CHAPTER XIX.

THE door opened, and a lady, holding a lamp in her hand, stood before Wolfgang. It was Aunt Bella. A sudden fear fell upon the young man when he saw his aunt, who, as far as he could remember, had only been

three or four times in all at his father's house, and then only on very extraordinary occasions. Had the fearful event really taken place? Was his mother dying—perhaps already dead? But his good aunt gave him no time to follow out the terrible thought: "She is much better, much better," she whispered quickly. "Come in, poor boy, you must have been grievously distressed."

With these words she seized him by the hand, and as he made no resistance she drew him into the room.

"Where is mamma?" asked Wolfgang.

"In the next room; she is sleeping," replied Aunt Bella, placing the lamp on the table. "Don't be frightened; she is doing well, very well indeed."

Wolfgang sat down on a chair. His knees were trembling. The precious certainty that his mother was out of danger, had relieved him of the spasm which had compressed his heart with fear and anxiety, and the tears came gushing from his eyes.

To see anybody weep without weeping herself, was an impossibility for Aunt Bella. She caressed Wolfgang, pushing his hair out of his face, and said, sobbing:

"Poor, poor boy! Yes, I can believe it! You must have suffered indeed! But now be calm! The doctor says it is nothing, and I say so too. I know these attacks myself. If any one could die of them, I should have been buried long ago."

"Good, dear aunt," said Wolfgang; "how I thank you that you came! It did not occur to me at all that you might be staying with mamma. If I had known that, I should not have been so much distressed."

"Well, how could you have thought of it?" said Aunt Bella. "God forgive us! it is rarely enough I come into the house. But I felt during all these days as if something was to happen to some member of your family. Since my poor brother Eugene died, I have never been free from anxiety."

"Uncle Eugene is dead?"

"Hush! not so loud! She might hear us in the next room." Aunt Bella drew her chair close up to Wolfgang and whispered:

"Yes, he is dead; your dear, good uncle. You hardly

knew him, and you cannot know what an excellent man he was. He died a week ago ; ah ! and a most fearful death ! Torn to pieces by his own machines ! I dare not think of it ! Your Uncle Peter went there to bring Ottilia back ; she is in the room there with your mother. Your mother says Ottilia's hand is like your own, and Ottilia has had to put her hand on her forehead, and thus she has been sleeping now for half an hour as sweetly as a baby. It is the most fortunate thing in the world I did not leave the poor girl at home, as I intended to do at first, for she had but just arrived when your Ursula came for me. Oh, what a stupid, foolish woman she is ! How can your mother—however, that is none of my business ! I asked her why she had not at once come to me, instead of first running over the whole town in search of your father, who left the house in the morning and has not returned yet, and what do you think she said ? She had thought I was not fond of your mother because I came so rarely to see her ! That is the consequence, when people, whom God has meant to be friends, part asunder from foolish pride or stupid obstinacy. But I hope that will be changed now. Your mother has become so fond of the little girl ! she will want to see her often, and then I can come too, although they may not send for me particularly. I am everywhere the fifth wheel."

"But ! Aunt Bella," said Wolfgang, "mamma always speaks of you with the greatest kindness, and I——"

"Hush ! hush !" said the aunt ; "I know what I know. Aunt Bella is in demand whenever there is any use for her. I have all my life been Cinderella in the family ; but I do not mind that ; not in the least ; I am used to it. But tell me, Wolfgang, what have you been doing at Rheinfeld ? I thought your father and the old general were arch enemies ? How on earth could that come about ? For heaven's sake, Wolfgang, have nothing to do with them. I tell you, they are all of them bad ; every one of them. If your father had stood by us, honestly and fairly, after he had once come to us, you would be better off, and so would we."

"Maybé, aunt," said Wolfgang, meditatively, "it may be so ; but that is a long story ; we'll discuss that some other time. Has papa not come back yet from the City Hall ? and what is going on in town ?"

"Heaven knows," replied Aunt Bella; "it looks as if men could not live in peace. My brother Peter left our house in the evening with Doctor Munzer and Doctor Holm, without saying a word. I did not like that at all, but they always say they do not stand upon ceremony with me. I wish you men had to endure, for once, the anxiety we suffer when we have to sit at home alone, not knowing what is going on out-doors, and starting every time the bell rings because we think, There comes a messenger with bad news! I do not understand your father; although your mother was not quite so sick when he left, still she was not well, and he might better have stayed at home. You would have stayed at home, I am perfectly sure; but you have Schmitz blood in your veins, and Schmitz blood is true. St! was not that your mother! Yes, she has waked up! Shall I go in and tell her you are here?"

"Please do, dear aunt; but do not trouble mamma, if she asks where papa is."

"I am not such a fool," replied Aunt Bella, with offended dignity. "Do you think I am a child? Do you hear? your mother is laughing; she must have waked up quite well again. I knew it would be so; Ottilia is a real angel. I am only curious to know what you will say when you see the little one. She would make a nice wife for you."

Aunt Bella rose and disappeared in the adjoining room.

Wolfgang walked up and down in great excitement, for the conversation with his aunt had touched him in his sensitive points. He had had similar conversations with the good lady before; but to-day, these unpleasant relations in the family, which had so often been talked over and regretted, appeared to him more painful than ever.

The few seconds he was kept waiting seemed to him an eternity. He heard Aunt Bella speaking, and then his mother, and then a soft, melodious voice, which he did not know.

The door opened.

"Will you come in, Wolfgang? Your mother is quite well now."

Wolfgang entered the room in which his mother's frequent indisposition had made him feel quite at home, and in which he had spent so many anxious hours by her bedside,

alternating between fear and hope. There lay his mother, looking pale and worn under the shadow of the curtains, which flowed down in rich folds, but greeting him with smiling lips and smiling eyes; and lighted up by the soft glow of a lamp which was on a stand near the head of the bed, sat a young girl, who rose, when he came near her, and joined Aunt Bella, who was preparing some refreshing drink at another table.

"Is that you, my Wolfgang?" said the mother. "Ah! I have longed for you so much! Pardon me for causing you so much anxiety; but I wanted to see you, I could not help it," and she placed her feeble arms around the neck of her darling son, who was bending over her, deeply moved, and kissed him as a mother only can kiss.

"Do not let me excite you too much, dearest mamma," said Wolfgang in a low voice; "I'll stay with you. Lie down again nicely! That's it."

"Oh, I feel quite strong," said Margaret, "quite strong!" and her head sank feebly back upon her pillow; "they have nursed me so tenderly, Bella and the dear little one. Where is Ottilia?"

"Did you call me, dear aunt?" said the young girl, turning towards the bed, and then hesitating timidly, as Wolfgang rose from his seat by his mother and looked at her with deep interest.

"Yes, my child," said Margaret. "Come here! I must show you my Wolfgang. That is Ottilia, Wolfgang!"

Ottilia came promptly up to the bed and bent over the patient, to conceal a burning blush which had suddenly overspread her whole face.

"Dear, sweet girl!" said Margaret, kissing her on her forehead. "He will be as fond of you as we all are; won't you, Wolfgang?"

"Certainly I will," said Wolfgang, offering his hand to Ottilia, who now turned towards him.

The young girl was about to say something in reply, but her lips only trembled, as she laid her hand slowly, almost hesitatingly, in that of Wolfgang.

Thus they stood, and now for the first time looked each other full in the face.

"That I will!" repeated Wolfgang, and this time he said

so with full conviction. "I feel as if we were old friends, Cousin Ottilia," he added, after a little pause, still holding her hand in his own.

"And I feel so too," replied Ottilia.

Margaret's eyes had rested with indescribable tenderness on the two tall forms.

"Now I have two children," she said in a whisper. She folded her hands on her bosom, and closed her eyes.

"I feel tired again," she said. "You would better go home, Bella and Ottilia; Wolfgang shall escort you. I do not want anybody to sit up with me. If I want anything, I can ring the bell and Ursula will come, but I know I shall sleep very well. Tell father, when he comes home, that I am quite well again. Do you hear, Wolfgang?"

Aunt Bella was by no means disposed to approve of this arrangement, and was just going to protest, but Wolfgang made her a sign to be silent. The good lady obeyed him, shaking her head. The three prepared very quietly to leave the room.

"Ottilia!" said Margaret in a low voice, and without opening her eyes; "Ottilia, you will come again to-morrow?"

"Certainly, dear aunt," replied the young girl.

"Well! Now let me sleep; I am so tired."

Wolfgang had accompanied the ladies to their house, and was now slowly walking homeward again, through the well-known streets. Everything was perfectly quiet now in that part of the town; only here and there some taverns and drinking-houses were still full of brawlers; but everywhere else people seemed to be tired of making useless noises; a few windows only were still lighted. The full moon had sunk low behind the huge houses, but shone yet, pale and silvery, on the lofty steeples; down below all was dark. Wolfgang felt as if the distance was enormous to-night. He was so tired that he dreamed as he walked. Already on his way to Peter Schmitz's house, he had hardly heard what Aunt Bella said, as she hung on his arm—it must have been very important, for she had been speaking incessantly and with great animation; but he did not recollect a word of what she had said. Ottilia, who walked on the other side of him, had been very silent; only once she had said: "Wolfgang must not do that!" but he did not know now

in what connection these words had been uttered. He tried to recall it, but the more he thought of it, the darker the past became to him. "What must I not do?" he asked himself again and again.

Thus he came into a quiet, lonely street, into which he had found his way through inattention, for his way did not lead him in this direction. As he passed one of the handsomest houses, marked by a balcony, supported by ivy-clad pillars, the front door suddenly opened, and a gentleman came down the steps so hurriedly that he knocked against Wolfgang, startling him rather rudely out of his dreams.

"Excuse me!" said the man, and hurried on.

"Was not that Doctor Munzer?" said Wolfgang to himself. "And how did I get here? Is not this Aunt Antonia's house? What has Munzer to do here?"

The meeting with Munzer had roused Wolfgang for a while, but soon the exhaustion overwhelmed him again. He could scarcely drag himself along, and was heartily glad when he reached his parents' house at last. He saw a light in the right-hand room downstairs, where his father slept. His father must be at home. The front door was locked. Wolfgang rang the bell cautiously, so as not to disturb his mother. No one came to open the door, but he saw the light in his father's bedroom move to and fro. Tired and impatient as he was, the young man climbed up on the lattice work, covered with creepers, till he could knock at the window, saying, "It is I!"

The curtain was raised, and Wolfgang jumped down again. The window opened and his father looked out.

"Is it you, Wolfgang?"

"Yes, papa!"

"Are you alone?"

"Who should be with me?" replied the young man, wondering at the question.

"I'll open directly."

A few minutes later the front door opened. Wolfgang saw his father standing before him in his dressing-gown, holding a light in his hand. He looked so pale, so disturbed, so utterly exhausted, that Wolfgang was frightened.

"Are you ill, papa?"

"Ill? Why?" replied his father, in the act of locking

the door again. Wolfgang noticed that the hand in which he held the candle trembled violently. He took the light from him, and as he touched his father's hand in doing so, he felt that it was icy cold.

"But, dear papa, you must really be ill!" exclaimed the young man, seriously concerned.

"Oh, not at all!" replied the counsellor, trying to smile. "I am worn out, literally worn out; all day long on my legs; speaking all the time. That is very fatiguing. I am very tired, very. Good-night! You can keep the light, I have another one burning in my room."

"Have you been up to mamma's room?"

"I? No, for heaven's sake, no!" and the alderman trembled visibly as he said so. "Go to bed, my boy," he added after a pause. "You need not look at me so anxiously; I am well, perfectly well, but rather tired. All day long on my legs; speaking all the time—good-night, my boy!"

The alderman wrapped himself closer in his dressing-gown, and went quickly into his room, locking the door behind him. Wolfgang was struck by this; generally his father slept with unlocked doors.

A strange anxious feeling overcame the young man, as with the light in his hand he stood there in the large hall, in which the monotonous ticking of the old hall-clock resounded unnaturally loud. The lamp in the glass shade flickered for a moment and then went out. Wolfgang was unpleasantly touched by this accident. He had just been thinking of his mother, and he felt as if it were a bad omen.

"You are over-fatigued," he said to himself. "Make haste to get into bed, or you will see ghosts to-night, sure enough."

He went cautiously upstairs, listened on the landing of the second story at the door of his mother's room—all was quiet. He went into the third story, to his own room in one of the gable-ends; there he had slept as a boy, and now occupied it whenever he came on a visit. He undressed slowly, for his hands almost refused to serve him, and he had scarcely blown out the light, when leaden sleep, broken by anxious dreams, fell upon his wearied soul.

CHAPTER XX.

BUT however anxious Wolfgang's dreams might be, far more anxious and fearful were the thoughts which during this night danced, as in a witches' dance, up and down in the wakeful mind of the man who had to-day staked the last remnant of his honor on one card, and must now fear every moment to lose his game. The slightest sound that was heard in the quiet house made him start; the ticking of the hall-clock, to which he had been accustomed for more than twenty years, now made him so nervous that he slipped out on tip-toe and stopped it; and when he had locked himself up once more in his room, all was so still! so still! and the blood in his ears sang so loud! so loud!—and he slipped out again and set the clock agoing once more. Then he heard an owlet in the old convent on the other side of the street, which did not cease to screech till other owlets joined in, calling out very distinctly: "Here, here, here is the thief, thief, thief!" It was intolerable; it would drive him mad.

And no light in the room! In the dark, his head buried in his hand—to have to sit so or to creep anxiously on the soft carpet and watch how the narrow bands of moonlight, which crept in through the curtains, moved slowly, ah! how slowly! on and on. The torment was only increased by his watching them, but it had to be borne. If the thing should come out, and the night-watch should depose that there had been a light burning all night long in the alderman's room? "Why was there a light burning? Why was he not asleep in his bed?" "My wife was sick, gentlemen. Do you expect a man to be able to sleep when his wife is sick unto death?" "But witness, Ursula Klingel, who was then in your service, and was sitting up with your wife, deposes that you never left your room, or at least that you never entered your wife's room that day and night? What have you to say to that, accused? And how do you explain that your bed was found undisturbed on the following morning? Speak, accused?" "I must go to bed," murmured the alderman, as, standing in the middle of the room, he ceased to recite the fearful cross-examination, wiping the big drops of perspiration from

his brow. "I must go to bed ; it would be additional evidence against me !"

He crept into his bed-room, which adjoined his library in the front part of the house, went to bed and pressed his feverish head deep into the pillows. And now ! Hark ! Was not that the step of a patrol, which came up the lonely street ? As long as he had been living here—twenty years—no patrol had ever come through this street. What could they want here except to come for him ? . . . Several police officers, no doubt, accompanied them . . . keeping step . . . to reassure him. But I am not so easily caught . . . an old fox . . .

With one leap the alderman was out of his bed and at the place near the wall where his pistols were hanging. He cocked one. "At the first knock on the front door or the window ! a flash, a noise, and all is over !"

But the patrol marched by with even step, and the echo soon died away at the other end of the street. The alderman drew a long breath, hung the pistol again in its place, and slipped into bed. His teeth knocked against each other ; fierce fever shook his limbs ; he drew the cover over his head, that he might see nothing and hear nothing ; and at last merciful sleep came and released the unhappy man from his torture.

But early in the morning he awoke, and now, while everything in the house and the town was still perfectly quiet, and the morning dawn chased away the nightly spectres, he could reflect on his situation in comparative quietude.

Taking all in all, his cards were not so bad ; they might have been worse, at all events. It was not very probable that the indolent burgomaster would do anything more with the City Treasury, except to let it be carried back to the old place ; and in these stormy times an examination of the treasury was a highly improbable thing, especially as, only a few days before, a resolution had been passed that no more paper money should be issued for the present. Then it was almost certain that he who had rendered the city such eminent services, and to whom they owed some kind of acknowledgment, would be chosen to take care of these very sums of money. The chief burgomaster had spoken of it only last night, as they went through the long passages up to the treasury. Alderman Heydman had become his en-

thusiastic admirer, since he had succeeded by his addresses in weaning the factory hands from their attachment to the revolution. If he once had the administration of the city revenues in his hands, he could easily replace the borrowed sum, either by instalments, or, if fortune favored him, and a certain long-desired speculation turned out well, by a single payment, and then he would be relieved from all care. What was now most important was to appear perfectly sound in his finances in the eyes of all his colleagues on the board, and to make this appearance still stronger by a public reconciliation with his family, and thus to furnish a brilliant proof that he, the scion of such an old and illustrious family, and a man of large fortune, could not possibly be one of those people who, in these days of confusion and suffering, threw themselves headlong into the whirlpool, because they had no name and no fortune to lose.

The principal difficulty, however, seemed to be how he should bring into circulation so large a sum of new notes without exciting suspicion. He had to pay ten thousand dollars in order to take up due-bills to that amount ; and he had taken yesterday, from the treasury, exactly ten thousand dollars in notes of five hundred and one hundred dollars, when he put them, without counting, into his coat pocket ; but his own private funds amounted in all only to five hundred dollars. These five hundred mixed with the thousands looked still very suspicious—he had made the experiment, with locked doors, as soon as he had risen—especially as he had to pay only three notes.

An accident, so favorable and fortunate that the alderman at first feared it was a trap to catch him, came to his aid. The old, miserly grocer at the street corner, with whom he had occasionally done some little business, came, towards nine o'clock, and begged to inquire if the alderman was disposed to do him a great favor, which he should be prepared to return at any time, when it was in his power. He had to send off six thousand five hundred dollars, and nothing but gold and silver in his house—could the alderman give him paper-money to that amount? He would like to take it in city currency, because he could make a little profit on it at the place to which he had to send the money. The alderman replied that he had a few city obligations in

his house, since part of the salary of the city officials was regularly paid out in such currency, but of course not as much as Mr. Pitter demanded ; but if the latter could return in an hour, he would probably be able by that time to collect the necessary amount by the aid of some friend, who he knew had city obligations.

Thus the alderman came in possession of money, which he could pay out without fear, at the same time that the treacherous notes were for a while at least carried off to a distant place, and the danger was thus considerably diminished.

Now, at last, Baron Hohenstein summoned courage to go upstairs to his wife. He was very much surprised to find her out of bed. This morning, Margaret felt perfectly well, as was apt to be the case after those attacks of hers. She had risen several hours ago, and could hardly await the time when she might have an hour's cosy chat with her Wolfgang. But Wolfgang had not answered her "Good morning, lazy sleeper !" which she had called out to him through the open door ; and when she had crept up to his bed to wake him with a kiss, she had found him in lethargic sleep, with feverish, flushed cheeks and half-closed eyes. She had only left his bed once since then, in order to send the servant for a physician, and thus the alderman found her.

"It is probably nothing at all," he said ; "over fatigue after the excitement of yesterday. Did you send for the doctor ? Don't trouble yourself about him ; we Hohensteins are quite tough."

He had felt the patient's pulse and then left the room again. His soul, thoroughly exhausted, was no longer capable of receiving outside impressions. And yet, after his own manner, he had been very, very fond of his son, his only child. It occurred to him that the old man at Rheinfeld might consider it an act of special courtesy if he should inform him of this new misfortune. He wrote, therefore, a few lines to the general, in which he complained bitterly of the injustice of fate, and its untiring persecutions.

The due-bills were paid ; the people who had received their money had congratulated the alderman on having so much gold and silver in his treasury at a time when the precious metals were everywhere seeking safe hiding-places.

And now the alderman had to brace himself to attend a meeting of the City Council, to which he had been summoned by the city messenger, Wenzel. He must be there at eleven o'clock, and yet he felt so tired, so exhausted—would it not be better to excuse himself on the plea of sickness? It was the truth; but how could he risk being sick to-day? How could he dare look ill even?

He glanced at the mirror, and was startled by his pale, haggard face. It was impossible to appear thus. He remembered that in former years, when they called him the "handsome Hohenstein," he had occasionally put on a little rouge after wild nights. He must have the requisite things still, somewhere among his toilet articles. He looked; he found the little ivory box, inlaid with silver; everything was still in good order, and with trembling hands he put it on his pale cheeks. He had not lost his former skill. He felt sure that the false appearance of fresh health looked quite natural.

He went out into the street. The morning sun was shining kindly over the gray roofs of the convent buildings, through the mighty tops of the old trees into the street, and in the branches birds were singing their carols—it was a glorious morning. But the alderman was not aware of it. Formerly he had always walked on one side of the street, the sunny side, because the warmth did him good; to-day he chose the other side, in the shade of the long convent wall. But in the next street he had to leave the shade and plunge into the din and turmoil of one of the principal arteries of the populous, busy city. He was accustomed to be greeted by the people, and he had always been proud of being bowed to by so many—to-day he felt as if all the people whom he had ever known, had agreed to meet him in the street. Every other man took off his hat to him, and stared into his eyes or his face; one or the other even turned round—he noticed it all—and looked after him. And there came Dr. Sneider, who probably went to see his son; he could not escape meeting him, and the little hunch-backed man had such desperately sharp eyes!

"Good morning, morning, alderman! Just about to go to your house. Hope nothing serious? But how charming you look! Growing younger, upon my word, every day! A

pinch? To-night at the club? eh? Must speak, alderman dear, must speak! Are the man of the day now! Addio!"

The alderman went on with firm steps. If Dr. Snekper did not notice anything peculiar about him, he was safe, as far as that went.

The meeting also passed off pleasantly. The clerks had not smiled when he entered the offices, but bowed to him with great respect, and hastened to open the door of the council-room for him; the chief burgomaster had not ordered the doors to be closed during the session, had not risen and said, pointing at him: "I am under the sad necessity, gentlemen" but had welcomed him, like all of his colleagues, with great cordiality; had inquired almost affectionately how his wife was to-day, and how he was; and had finally said with great emphasis: "I am delighted to see you look so well, dear colleague; it is as if we had won a victory; you are a real blessing to us now. May heaven grant you strength! We shall have to look to you for assistance quite often now." Then he had taken him aside and said, in a whisper: "All right again at the old place! Let us say as little as possible about it, so that the thing does not become too public. The treasurer has sent word he is sick again. You will have to make up your mind to be his successor. There is very little to do. An examination will be unnecessary; we have seen the whole thing yesterday; ha! ha! ha! We can settle the matter quietly between us; Krause will be satisfied, and so will the others. May I beg the gentlemen to take their seats? We must go to business."

The question before them was, to know what measures the magistrates should take, under present circumstances, to protect the citizens and their property. A few of the members—among them lawyer Kattebolt—thought there was but one way to get out of the present difficulties, and that was to grant the people arms, as they desired. The people, he said, must be made to feel an interest in the common weal and woe. If they are excluded, they fall into the hands of the revolutionary party. But this view was only feebly supported, and no one opposed it more violently than Alderman Hohenstein. "I have always been in favor of liberty," he said, "and I am still; but, gentlemen, unbounded liberty is no longer liberty; that is anarchy, the dissolution of all ties,

chaos itself. Do you wish us to return to chaos? Who are these people of whom so much is said? Who seem to be the only party in the state now? Not the sovereigns and their servants; not the government officials or the officers of the communities; not those who have culture and energy; above all, not the property-holders; not even the steady mechanics, whose work is sadly interfered with by all this rioting. Who is it, then? A few over-wrought minds, who do not know themselves very clearly what they are after; men who have missed their vocation, or whose vocation it is to have none, or none that is ostensible. Ambitious men, fishing in troubled waters; bankrupts anxious to escape imprisonment for debts; and behind them a loose set of men, each one of whom singly is merely an object of contempt for you, and whom you respect *en masse*, only because it is a mass, a crowd. Look at France, and you will be horrified to see where it leads to if the people and the rabble are confounded with each other. Do you wish us to have French scenes enacted in our land? Look at Southern Germany, and you will understand that the revolutionists desire the same state of things here as in France. But they are powerless here, God be thanked, and will remain powerless, if we do not ourselves recklessly give them the power we now hold in our hands."

Baron Hohenstein's speech had been frequently interrupted by loud applause; a unanimous bravo rewarded him, after he had spoken the last words, as he sank in unfeigned exhaustion back into his chair. They were unanimously of the opinion that the people were nothing but rabble, and that it would be committing high treason against the country to enter into negotiations with socialistic enthusiasts and their mad followers. Only lawyer Kattebolt—an obstinate man, and a special adversary of the alderman, of whose circumstances he knew more than the latter liked—insisted upon his opposition. In a lengthy speech—during which all his colleague's expressions of dissent could not disconcert him for a moment—he explained his views, and placed before them the alternative of openly and honestly acknowledging the revolution with all its consequences, or of submitting to a terrible re-action, which would re-establish the old regime, in all its horrors, and make Germany for a gen-

eration the foot-ball of Europe. Then, looking fixedly through his spectacles at Baron Hohenstein, he cried : "And who are those who dare give you such fatal advice? Men who belong to a class of society that has never yet admitted a trace of true humanity, of genuine love of our fellow-beings ; men who were liberal as long as liberalism was profitable—very profitable, gentlemen! And who now, when the chances are less promising, no longer remember that they ever were liberal, that they ever joined the people, that they are even at this very moment bound to the people by ties which everywhere else are looked upon as sacred."

"If these allusions are meant for me——" exclaimed Hohenstein, starting up from his seat.

"*Qui se sent morveux qu'il se mouche!*" said Mr. Kattbolt.

"Fie, fie!" cried Alderman Heydman.

"It is unbearable! It must not be allowed! Really, he has not deserved that!" cried several voices in confusion.

"Baron Hohenstein has the floor!" exclaimed the chief burgomaster, who had been ringing the little silver bell that stood before him on the council-table for more than a minute.

"I have only to say a few words, gentlemen," began Hohenstein, in a voice which trembled with excitement from within, although externally he was as calm and as haughty as ever. "A very few words ; if you choose to call it so, nothing at all ; for to insults that have no foundation whatever, there is no reply, at least no reply which would be in place at this hour and in this room."

"No adversary is overcome nowadays with feudal weapons," sneered Mr. Kattbolt, with a scornful laugh.

"Fie, fie!" cried Alderman Heydman.

"Outrageous! intolerable! nonsense!" seconded half a dozen others.

"Gentlemen," said chief burgomaster Dasch, making a great effort to be heard above the din caused by so many persons speaking at once ; "I pray, I beseech you, do not let us engage in dissensions of such a kind at a moment when we ought to pursue our end *viribus unitis!* Let us esteem the common welfare higher than our private interests! Let us sacrifice ourselves on the altar of our common coun-

try! A true man is worth much in evil times like ours; but, gentlemen, two true men are worth a great deal more. As the chief magistrate of this city, as your old colleague, and—may I not say so?—as your friend, I beseech you, dear friends and colleagues, do not rise from this table without first having shaken hands in token of your reconciliation?”

“Bravo, bravo!” cried Heydman.

“I am perfectly ready to forget that I have been attacked!” said Hohenstein, extending his hand with dignity across the table towards his adversary.

“I have only spoken for the cause which was under question; as for the person—I trouble myself little about that,” growled Mr. Kattebolt, touching the proffered hand with his finger-tips.

Thus peace was restored, and soon after the meeting was adjourned, after a resolution had been passed by an overwhelming majority to let matters rather come to the worst, than to yield to the demands of Munzer and his companions and to grant arms to the people at large.

“You paid him well!” said Alderman Heydman to Baron Hohenstein, as they were both going down the broad staircase of the City Hall. “A keen, scoffing fellow, a quarrelsome brawler, who seems to have a special spite against you. Take care of that man, my dear Baron Hohenstein!”

“Pshaw! what can he do?” said the alderman.

“Hm, hm!” said Mr. Heydman. “The fellow has a finger in every pie, and to-day is pay-day. If you should want any money, Baron Hohenstein, a few thousand dollars are always to be had for Heydman & Co.’s friends!”

The alderman felt an electric shock. If he had been offered that much a few days earlier—if it had been done yesterday!

“Of course, only for a short time,” said the cautious manufacturer, who repented of his offer almost as soon as he had made it. “Money is very scarce now, and we must all be prepared.”

“You are very kind,” said Baron Hohenstein. “But I am fortunately able as yet to help myself.”

“Very well,” said Mr. Heydman, very well pleased not to have been taken at his word. “But I must turn in here; no harm done, Baron Hohenstein, I meant it well.”

"Of course, of course ! Such a friend !"

"Much obliged ! Much obliged !"

The gentlemen shook hands, and the alderman walked on alone.

"It would have been of no use, after all," he said to himself. "I have gone too far ; I cannot go back now."

It was afternoon before the alderman reached his house again. He went at once to his room, rang for a maid, asked how his son was, and upon Ursula's report that he was better, he told her to bring him some bread and a bottle of wine. He instructed her, also, not to tell his wife that he had come home, as he was too tired to come to dinner, and wanted to sleep a few hours. He could be seen by nobody, "do you hear, Ursula, by ~~no~~body whatever !"

The alderman put on his dressing-gown, and laid down on his sofa ; but sleep, for which he so ardently longed, would not come. The tormenting anxiety lest his crime might be discovered at any moment, had been much diminished by the events of the morning, but he knew only too well that it might come at any moment. And what was he to do next ? His fatal crime had rescued him from momentary embarrassment ; the ten thousand dollars had slipped through his fingers as through a sieve ; why had he not taken twenty or thirty thousand at once ? It was all one, and he could have replaced a larger sum probably more easily than the smaller sum. How foolishly timid he had been ; but then it was not too late yet. He was in all probability to be made city treasurer himself, and then !—but how to manage it till then ? If he now showed any sign of weakness, he was a lost man ; he had misled Heydman & Co. ; he must do the same with the others—especially people like that man Kattebolt. "How the fellow stared at me ! and what an infernal smile he has ! as if he knew it all, and only did not want to betray me, because he liked to torture me. I must have money—but how can I get it ? how ?"

The alderman passed in review all the people who might possibly help him. There were few respectable persons among them, mostly well-known usurers or reckless speculators. For a moment he even thought of his brother-in-law Peter. But that was out of the question, of course. How could he dare present himself before Peter, after all that

had happened? especially since he had spoken so violently against the republican tendencies which Peter had cherished ever since he had known him ; and then he knew perfectly well that Peter's circumstances were by no means brilliant. His radical paper did not pay well ; the alderman's friends and acquaintances all thought it would not live beyond the next three months, unless it should adopt more moderate views—a change which was not likely to occur, considering the well-known convictions of the proprietor and the two editors. Then the death of Peter's brother Eugene—the alderman knew the whole situation of the Schmitz family too intimately, not to be aware that this event would be a new source of expense to Peter.

"There is no one who can help me except the old man at Rheinfeld," murmured the alderman, jumping up from his sofa, and pressing his cold hands on his feverish temples, as he strode up and down the room. "But he won't. He has been kind enough to Wolfgang, to be sure, but it is a long way from such kindness to his opening his strong-box. And why must Wolfgang be taken sick just now? If he were well, I could at least find out the old man's opinion of us."

When the alderman last night committed the fatal act that made him a criminal, he had flattered himself with the idea that he was doing what he did, not for his own sake, but for that of his family, whom he did not wish to expose to the disgrace of a reckless failure ; and now when the deed was done, the thought of his wife and his son caused him intolerable pain, for he knew they would with horror reject the sacrifice he had made for their sake, and prefer anything, even death itself, to such a salvation. Last night it had occurred to him that his wife might die, and he had breathed more freely, for thus half of this burden would be taken from him ! And this morning, when he saw his son lying pale and suffering before him, he had again felt nothing else than that a wretch like himself ought not to have such a son, and that a son like Wolfgang ought not to have such a father, and that it might be better for him never to awake again. And yet Wolfgang's friendly relations with the old gentleman at Rheinfeld were now his only hope. It was evident that the general's interest was confined to Wolfgang ; perhaps he

might grant to the son what he would refuse to the father ! And now Wolfgang must be sick in bed !

The alderman pulled off his dressing-gown—he never appeared à *négligé* in his own family, if he could possibly avoid it—dressed, and went upstairs to the sick-room. He found Ursula sitting by his bedside, who told him in a whisper that the young man had been awake for an hour, that he was much better, and her mistress had but just this moment left him to go downstairs to receive Miss Bella Schmitz and the young lady who had spent the whole of last night with her. The alderman frowned. Surely, this was not the time for reviving the old family relations—now, when it was all important to him to make his breaking off with the republican party as public as possible, and especially to show that he had nothing at all to do with his humble connections in the ranks of the democracy.

He sat down by his son's bed, took his hot hand in his own, and let it drop again, because he fancied Wolfgang had started at the touch, as if in pain.

Thus he sat, lost in thought, and recalled the time when Wolfgang was born, and how proud he had been that it was a son, and what hopes he had formed in connection with him. At that time he was still in partnership with Peter Schmitz—at least ostensibly ; and he had said to himself, Peter must help me to make the boy rich, and then he shall resume the place in the world which his father has so recklessly abandoned. How far had these hopes been fulfilled ? He had forsaken his brother-in-law, in order to reach his aim more quickly ; but he had sorely miscalculated. His brother-in-law had not grown rich, it was true, but he had remained an honest man ; he himself was poorer than ever—and—

The alderman started up ; he felt as if he were stifled. He whispered to Ursula that he had important business to attend to in town, and would probably be out late. If her young master should not be better, Ursula was not, as usual, to leave a lighted lamp in his library ; he would come and sit up with his son himself.

He left the house, and crept about for hours through the dark streets, always choosing the loneliest portions of the town. He had intended to go to a restaurant which he was in the habit of frequenting, but he felt himself unequal to

the effort to look natural and to chat as usual. His strength was nearly exhausted. He could hardly drag himself along.

He entered a low inn in the suburbs, and asked for a glass of wine. This refreshed him somewhat. He was just going to ask for another glass, when he noticed two men in blouses who sat near by at a table and smoked their short clay pipes, looking at him, and putting their heads together. He gave the bar-maid the first piece of money that fell into his hand, and left instantly.

Once more he was wandering through the deserted streets. He came near the great cathedral. From the tall windows of a side chapel lights were dimly shining upon the square ; he heard the organ and chants. He stopped for a moment, thinking what a consolation it would be to him if he could creep into the darkest corner there, and confess to the ear of a man who is bound to secrecy by a fearful oath, that he, Baron Arthur Hohenstein, city alderman, son of Governor Baron Hohenstein, formerly an officer in the army, was a common thief . . .

“ They are happy, these Catholics ! And if they commit murder, they still can find somebody to whom they can tell it. I wonder how they ever have the courage ? I could not tell any man, even if his lips were sealed by the holiest of holy oaths. Only the dead keep secrets. I wish I were dead.”

He went on, and unconsciously his steps bore him to the bridge. He went out on the bridge, until he was at an equal distance from either bank, and the lights which were here and there reflected on the water. There he leaned over the railing and looked down into the deep, dark waters, as they glided by, gently, gently, now and then boiling up in little whirlpools, reckless, irresistible, incessant, mysterious, like death ! Yes, there was true secrecy ! And yet, did not even the stream betray secrets when it washed the suicide's corpse on shore, a few miles below, amid the reeds and rushes, so that the fishermen could drag it out with their vile hooks ? and then a few hours later, the town would be full of reports how Alderman Hohenstein had been found ; how he had thrown himself into the river to escape disgrace ; how the river had cast him out again, unwilling to keep him . . .

The alderman started once more to struggle back again

to his house, through the silent street. When he was quite near his home, however, a sudden, fearful apprehension seized him: suppose the police were waiting for him in the house?—suppose a couple of strong men should throw themselves upon him and gag him, as soon as he should open the door! With beating heart and cold perspiration on his burning brow, he crept nearer and nearer, clinging to the dark shade of the convent wall and glancing timidly across at his house. All was silent there; not a shadow was passing across the white curtains, lighted up from within. In the garret, also, from Wolfgang's chamber, a faint glimmer was seen. Not a sound could be heard; only the night-watch called out midnight from the convent near by.

The watchman must not find him at so late an hour in the street! He quickly entered the house, and breathed freely, as he found himself at last in his library with the door securely locked.

Fortunately, Ursula had left the loaf of white bread and the bottle of wine on the table before the sofa. The unfortunate man needed refreshment; he had scarcely eaten or drunk anything during the whole day; but even now he found it impossible to eat; he only drank the wine eagerly. Then hearing the watchman's steps at the corner of the street, he quickly put out his light, and went to bed in the dark. He was so tired, his limbs almost refused to carry him, and yet sleep would not come to his eyes. As soon as he became drowsy, some horror or other arose before his mind's eye: lawyer Kattbolt, who offered him scornfully a handful of new paper money, issued by the town authorities; Chief Burgomaster Dasch, who turned his eyes and lifted his arms to heaven—and he was sitting up once more in his bed, listening to the ticking of the hall-clock, and the low creaking of the vane on the nearest church-steeple. Then he remembered that he had not examined his pistols for a long time, and that the caps might have become useless. He rose, took the little round box from the drawer, and renewed the caps.

The certainty of being able at any moment to take his own life, and to leave his pursuers only a dead body on which to wreak their vengeance, at last brought him a little more quiet towards morning, and with it the long-desired sleep.

It was nearly noon when he awoke. He felt much stronger. He was not quite as conscious of the load of his crime, and evidently began to get accustomed to the burden. He made his toilet with scrupulous neatness, ate his breakfast with unusual appetite, and looked over the newspapers with his old interest.

"Did you see, sir, the letter I put on your writing-table last night?" asked Ursula, as she was taking away the breakfast things.

"No. I suppose it was nothing of importance."

The alderman had said this in a tone of indifference, but he had started at the word "letter," as if he had stepped upon a snake. A letter is a grievous thing for a man whose conscience is not clear. The alderman held the newspaper close before his face, till Ursula had left the room. Then he hastened with two steps to the writing-table. His heart beat high. There was the letter—a glance at the coarse paper, folded up in the most old-fashioned manner, and scrawled over with strangely stiff and ornate letters, told him at once that it came from the old general at Rheinfeld. What did he want? To inquire after his son, whose sickness he had reported to him yesterday? That would be a great, a very significant compliment—especially now, when the old man's good-will was of such vast importance.

He opened the letter with trembling hands and read :

DEAR NEPHEW !—The news of your wife's recovery was very pleasing to me, whereas I hear with *déplaisir* that your son Wolfgang is reported on the sick-list, which I relish all the less, as I take an interest in the boy and mean to grant him my protection. Wherefore I have written yesterday to your brother Gisbert, directing him to give Wolfgang a place in his regiment. I desire also a *union* between your boy and your brother Philip's youngest daughter, as the monkeys are handsome and well-made, and their family may do honor to the Hohensteins. Wherefore, I shall write to your brother Philip, informing him also of my intentions, which he will no doubt accept with cheerfulness, considering that he is a sly fox, and knows very well which are sweet grapes, and which are sour. And thus I am,

Your affectionate uncle,

EBERHARD, BARON HOHENSTEIN, of Rheinfeld.

While the alderman was painfully deciphering these lines, the trembling of his hands spread over his whole body ; his pale cheeks flushed up, his deep-sunk, lack-lustre eyes began to shine . . . Here was rescue ! rescue from his grim despair ! At least a prospect, a near, almost certain, prospect of rescue.

The poor man tottered to a chair, holding the letter in his hand, and tears, such as he had not wept since his childhood, broke from his eyes. In that deep emotion, caused mainly by nervous weakness and bodily exhaustion, he vowed, if he should this time escape from utter ruin, to become a good man, an affectionate husband, a loving father, and an upright, fair-dealing man of business.

But this tender emotion did not last long. He might become pious when he was perfectly safe, and that was yet afar off. As yet he had nothing but hope, possibility, perhaps a fair prospect—and perhaps not so much even as that ! If Wolfgang should refuse to enter into the old man's views ? Wolfgang had never shown the slightest fondness for a soldier's profession ; on the contrary, during his service in the army he had constantly complained of the countless little annoyances and useless exactions to which he had been subjected. And then ! Wolfgang was a very independent character, not easily dazzled by appearances—might not his beautiful cousin have failed to attract him ? It had almost looked so, the alderman thought, during their recent visit at Rheinfeld. And then the boy's liberal notions ! His undisguised antipathy to his noble relations and the unmistakable respect which he showed for his uncle Peter Schmitz and his aunt Bella ! Finally, his intimacy with Munzer, of whom he always spoke with great respect and sincere esteem—in terms most offensive to his father . . . No, no ! nothing was certain as yet ; everything in a state of painful, harassing doubt.

The alderman rose from his chair and walked up and down in the room, unable to summon courage to face his wife, whom he had not seen for two days now, and to speak to Wolfgang, who, as Ursula reported, had been engaged for an hour in a most lively conversation with her mistress.

CHAPTER XXI.

WHEN Wolfgang, at noon on the second day after his return from Rheinfeld, awoke from a deep, dreamless, and most refreshing sleep, his disease was broken, and he had escaped the threatened danger. At first he could not recollect where he was, nor how he came there; and why his mother, who sat by his side, should bend over him with bright tears of joy in her sweet, gentle eyes.

"Have I really been sick, mamma?" he said, returning her kisses and her caresses.

"Very sick," replied his mother; "for two bad days you have frightened your mamma, but now all is right again; the doctor, who was here an hour ago, says all is right, and you waked up with bright, clear eyes, darling—but now you must lie still, very quiet, and must not talk and excite yourself, or you will be sick again, my darling."

Wolfgang sank back on his bed. His mother smoothed his pillows, rose to let down the curtain through which the bright noonday sun was shining, sat down again by his bedside, took one of his hands in her own, and smiled kindly at him with loving eyes.

As he was lying there, silently enjoying his new lease of life, half awake and half in a dream, the memory of the last days passed in clear, well-defined images before his quiet soul. And in the foreground of all these pictures he saw the graceful, slender form of a marvellously beautiful girl, who seemed now to turn towards him with playful merriment, and now to escape from him with timid shyness, while at last she falls, full of love and demanding love, on his bosom. And suddenly a dark cloud arises and blots out all the bright, sunny pictures; the girl, whose beating heart he has but just felt warm and loving near his own, tears herself from his arms and vanishes in the depths of the park, which changes into the sandy road along the river-side, on which the rattling carriage of old Moss drags him slowly, slowly—as if he were never to reach his father's house, where his dear sick mother lies anxiously waiting for him. And

again in the dim light of the sick-room the form of another girl steps forward, a girl hardly less beautiful than the first one in the park at Rheinfeld, a girl whose noble, simple appearance appeals to him like a song of his childhood—of his childhood.

"That is very strange," says Wolfgang, looking up at his mother.

"What is strange, darling?"

"I feel as if I had known Ottilia long since—as if she were the sister I always wanted to have when I was playing before your bed, and the sofa cushions would not answer any of my questions."

Margaret's eyes shone brightly, as she was bending over her darling son.

"Then you felt just as I did," she said; "I have not been able to shake off the same feeling since my eyes first beheld the sweet child. I always feel since as if I had two children. She was here again yesterday, with Aunt Bella, and so sorry to hear you were sick—poor child, as if she had not sorrow enough of her own! She comforted me so sweetly: 'To-morrow I'll be here again,' she said, 'and I'll make Wolfgang get well again; and then, when he is quite strong once more, I'll come every day and sit here at the window by you; it is so still and cool here, and the old trees look so cosily over the old wall there—it is too pretty here.'" And her soft sweet voice sounded so gentle, like the low twittering of swallows in early spring."

"Of my childhood—of my childhood," said Wolfgang, dreamily, to himself.

"And do you know, darling," began his mother once more, tenderly stroking his hands, "that in your wanderings you have spoken of hardly anything else but Ottilia? that you held long conversations with her?"

"With Ottilia?" asked Wolfgang, and his pale cheeks flushed up; "are you quite sure I spoke of Ottilia and to Ottilia?"

"I should think so," said Margaret, smiling; "at least you spoke her name often enough."

"Strange! strange!" murmured Wolfgang.

"What is there so strange in that?" asked his mother; "but here we are chatting and chatting, and the doctor says

you must be kept perfectly quiet. I am a nice nurse. There, now lie still and don't open your lips."

"No, no!" replied Wolfgang, warmly; "let us chat. I feel perfectly well, and have so much to tell you."

"What is it, darling?" said Margaret.

Wolfgang opened his arms and drew his mother to the edge of his bed, as he used to do when he was a child, whenever he wanted to confide to her his childish and boyish secrets; and just as trustingly he now confided to his beloved mother his last great secret, the secret of his love for Camilla: at first with much hesitation and many blushes; but when the great word had once been spoken out, full of life and of eloquence, as was his habit. He told her all the little details of his brief romance, all his hopes and doubts, his apprehensions, and all that had filled his noble heart, and occupied his active mind to overflowing, during the last eventful days.

"Now I have made my full confession, dearest mamma," he concluded, "and now you must tell me if you are pleased; for until I know that, I cannot be perfectly happy, however I may desire to be happy."

Margaret did not at once reply, because it was simply impossible for her to give a direct yes or no to his question—her soul was so full of conflicting sensations. At first and above all, she had felt jealousy of the happy woman to whom she would henceforth have to give up the heart that had so long been her own exclusively. But no one could well measure the depth of her grief at such a loss, who did not know how wretchedly unhappy the poor woman was in her married life, and how she had sought all her happiness and her sole comfort upon earth in this one darling son. She had enjoyed his love, as a poor summer-plant, that has long been kept in a dim, musty room, enjoys light and warmth during the short moments when the sun shines upon its pale leaves; and now she was to be deprived of the only, the greatest treasure God had given her. For Margaret had never given her love by halves, and Wolfgang was the child of her heart; of course Margaret did not remember that he was a man, and that men's hearts feel differently from the half-broken heart of a lonely, ill-used woman.

But this jealousy was only the first involuntary impulse of

her heart, like the low, painful ring of a harp when it is suddenly jarred. Then she was overcome by her deep-rooted, long-cherished fear of that family with whom she had come into contact only as the lamb comes in contact with the wolves. This fear was almost a superstition with her. She dreaded this hard, proud, cruel family, who had forced her husband to drink the cup of humiliation and contempt to the very dregs—who had done everything in their power, by their hostile, repulsive conduct, to alienate him from her. She looked upon this family as the embodiment of all those qualities in her husband which she had been unable to admire as a young loving wife, and which she had seen every year more clearly were the dark shadows upon his bright soul. And in this family her son, her true, honest, tender-hearted son, hoped to find the wife of his bosom! Don't do it, don't do it! called a voice in her heart.

And then, would not such a marriage tear forever the slight tie which bound her yet to her own family? Would her brother Peter—so deeply injured, so carefully avoided, and yet so very dear to her—would he not be justified now in saying what he had once told her with tears in his eyes: "that she had severed all ties with her blood-relations in the world and in her heart?" And just in these days she had cherished the hope that she might be able to show her brothers and sisters, in the affection she felt for her new niece, how fondly she was yet attached to them all!

But on the other hand, might not thus the curse be removed under which she had suffered so sorely; that she, and she alone, had alienated her husband from his family, had torn him from his career, and had made him the unhappy man he had so often bitterly stated himself to be. Ought she for a moment to think of her own interests? And above all, if Wolfgang should really find there that happiness which she wished so anxiously he might obtain, could she doubt for a moment what was her duty under such circumstances?

Still it was a very painful smile which played around Margaret's lips, as she raised her eyes, and looking at Wolfgang with a most affectionate glance, said in a low voice:

"My darling boy, you cannot be happy without my being pleased, and I cannot be pleased unless you are happy.

Love your Camilla then, and be happy ; only, Wolf, you must keep a little love for your poor mamma ! ”

The tears gushed from her eyes as she said the last words, and sobbing, she hid her face in her son's bosom.

“ You have something else in your heart, mamma dear,” said Wolfgang ; “ you are not quite pleased with me ! Speak out, mamma. Did you not always boast you could tell me everything ? Pray, pray, dearest mamma, tell me all that you think. Your heart ought to be as light to-day as mine is. What is it ? ”

“ Nothing, really nothing ! ” said Margaret, rising again and drying her tears. “ You are good and you are clever ; and if you say Camilla loves you, she must be a good girl, and no doubt will do all she can to become more and more worthy of you. And your father will be so glad ; he loves you tenderly, and would like so much to see you live more comfortably than he has been able to do. He was so much pleased with the good news you wrote us from Rheinfeld, and that granduncle was so kind to you, and the aunt and all of them. ‘ That boy will go further than I went,’ he said again and again. He is now on a better footing with Uncle Gisbert and Uncle Philip ; but—I do not know why—I cannot reconcile myself to the thought that your relations really mean it well with us, or believe that they would not draw back again as soon as we took them in earnest. And how that would hurt your father ! and what would then become of you, my poor boy ? ”

“ Oh, I have more courage ! ” said Wolfgang, cheerfully. “ They will say yes and amen, you may be sure ! That old granduncle of mine, first of all ”—and he now told her more fully how very gracious the old gentleman had been to him during the whole time and down to the last moments, and that he had dismissed him with the words : Mean to do something for you, my boy ; won't be to your harm, if you obey my wishes. “ Now, darling mother, one hand washes the other. If our relations, who have lived so long at war with us, wish to make peace with us, they must pay for their peace, and the price of peace is Camilla, and they shall and will pay that price.”

Wolfgang was in the happiest state of mind, and his mother was too much accustomed to feel happy herself, when she

saw her son happy, not to fall in now with his cheerfulness. She smiled upon him kindly as he built his magnificent castles in the air, and at last, wearied by much talking, turned his head on one side, and, still holding his mother's hand in his own, fell gently asleep.

Margaret sat for some time in the sunny stillness, thinking over in her deeply-moved soul all that had been discussed just now. Then she rose cautiously, kissed the sleeper on his brow, and left the room noiselessly. She was desirous to carry the news—which she knew would be most welcome news—to her husband, who had had so much care and anxiety during these last days.

The alderman was just on the point of coming upstairs, with the old gentleman's letter in his breast pocket, and was just opening the door to go out, when a gentle knock came, and his wife entered the room.

Margaret ran up to him and wound her arms around his neck.

"I have not seen you for so long a time, Arthur!" she said, as if apologizing for an act of tenderness which, to be sure, was not of very frequent occurrence in this household.

Baron Hohenstein had returned his wife's caresses with unusual warmth. He felt an anxious desire to have his wife on his side in this most important game, which had put such excellent cards in his hand. He knew but too well how much influence she had over Wolfgang.

"Very long, Margie," he said, placing his arm around her youthful, slender waist, leading her to the sofa and sitting down by her side. "Yes, these have been bad days for me; and probably for you too, poor child! First you must be sick, and then Wolfgang! But you are all right again, both of you, are you not?"

"Better, at least," replied Margaret, heartily grateful for her husband's kindness, and pressing his hand to her lips. "I think—well, we have just had a long, long talk with each other, Wolfgang and I."

Margaret smiled and looked at her husband half anxiously and half playfully. She was so little used to find him her confidant, she hardly knew how to adapt herself to the new position, although she felt quite sure that the news she had to give him would be pleasant and welcome.

"A long talk!" said the alderman; "and if I may ask without indiscretion, what was the subject?"

Margaret blushed and looked as maidenly and bashful in her embarrassment as if she had to confess her own love affairs.

"You make me quite curious," said the alderman. "What was it?"

"I have to tell you a great piece of news, Arthur."

"So have I, dear Margie," he replied. "Do you speak first, or we shall never begin."

There was again the old heartless tone that had made Margie so often unhappy. She felt suddenly as if she could not tell this man what she had just heard—the secret of her son's heart, the hopes of her idol. And yet, her husband looked so pale, so worn out; he had no doubt had great cares weighing him down, and needed some joy to restore him.

"It is only this, Arthur," Margaret said, making an effort which drove all the blood to her cheeks, "Wolfgang has made greater conquests at Rheinfeld than we thought, and of which he wrote us nothing. He has not only won the good-will of the general, but the president's wife also has treated him with much distinction, and Camilla—well, I must come out with it, and I hope you will not be displeased, but Camilla is in love with Wolfgang . . ."

"And Wolfgang?" asked the alderman, hastily, and pale with excitement. "And Wolfgang?"

"He likes her also pretty well," replied Margaret, who could not utter the words, "he loves her."

"That is good news indeed!" cried the alderman, embracing his wife—this time without any affectation. "But now you shall hear my news also. Look here! from the old man—his own handwriting—you must not mind the words—such an old gentleman uses at times strange language—well, what do you say? Is not that lucky?"

"Yes—but," said Margaret.

"What But? No But!" exclaimed the alderman, who had risen, and was walking up and down with long strides. "If the old man says yes, the others cannot say no. I know them."

"But, Arthur," said Margaret, timidly; "there the letter

says something more, and something else. Wolfgang is to become a soldier."

"How you talk!" exclaimed the alderman. "A soldier! As if it was Tom, Dick, and Harry! He is to be an officer, as I was, and as I still might be, if——"

Baron Hohenstein swallowed the end of the sentence, for he saw the tears start in Margaret's eyes, and he was not yet able to see her cry without being troubled.

"Be sensible, Margie," he said, sitting down again by her side, "and do not interfere with our plans, I pray you? You know how very important it is for me to be fully reconciled to my family. I cannot tell you how very, very anxious I feel about it just now. Yes, it is of such importance to me, that if this reconciliation should not be effected—if Wolfgang should be so very unkind as to abandon me in the hour of trouble—well, well, I did not mean to cause you any anxiety, child! But you must stand by me. Wolfgang must be won over; you must help me, and all may come right again; yes, all may yet come right again!"

Baron Hohenstein was in a state of very great excitement. The old gambler was aroused in him. Was it not exactly as at the faro-table? Yesterday he had lost everything. To-day he had won it all back. He had gone through the same thing so often! He had been so often on the point of blowing out his brains! And each time, by some means or other, he had escaped the worst. Why should it be different this time, to-day, when, after the unlucky turn of the cards last night, card after card came out in his favor?"

"I'll go up at once to Wolfgang!" he said.

"Please, dear Arthur, not just now," said Margaret. "Wolfgang had just fallen asleep when I left him to come down here. He is still very feeble. I fear it might be too much for him."

"As you like! as you like!" replied the alderman. "You can speak to him first! Or no, better let me do it. You might become sentimental, both of you, and then I would have twice as much trouble. I have to go out now, Margie. You need not keep dinner waiting for me. And one other thing, Margie: they tell me your relatives have been here yesterday and to-day. I cannot permit that. Now, when all eyes are upon me and every step of mine is watched,

I cannot afford to have republican relations with River street."

"But, Arthur!" replied Margaret, "is not that quite hard? My brother died a week ago, and I am not to be allowed to see my brother's child?"

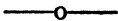
"Oh, indeed!" said Baron Hohenstein. "Pray, excuse me! I had really forgotten that. But nevertheless, the question here is about weightier matters than trifling family sentimentality. Good-by, Margie!"

The alderman had arranged his cravat before the mirror; he had brushed his hat and was looking at his watch.

"Great heavens! Half past eleven! It is high time I should be gone, if I want to see the colonel. Good-by, Margie!"

He kissed his hand to his wife, and hastened out at the door.

Margaret followed slowly. She locked the door mechanically and hung the key in its usual place, and then came back once more, because she had forgotten already whether she had locked it or not. She was almost stunned by all she had heard. Only this she knew, that a great gulf had opened between her and her son's father, so that the timid, loving arms which she extended towards him, no longer reached across; and only this she feared, that this gulf might separate her from her son also. That was the most painful thought for poor Margaret; and as she slowly, slowly went up the long staircase, the tears came, drop by drop, rolling down her pale cheeks one by one.



PART SECOND.

CHAPTER I.

"BARON WILLAMOWSKI, I think you are decidedly brighter to-day than usual."

"Do you really think so?" said the young officer, casting a languishing look at the object of his admiration.

"Certainly! Unfortunately, however, I am not equal to-day to so very clever a conversation. Besides, mamma has sent for me. You must please excuse me."

Camilla rose from the seat at the window, where she had been so deeply engrossed in an embroidery that she seemed hardly to have listened to the harmless conversation between her sister and the young officer of dragoons, swept by them without deigning them a look, yet so close that her silk dress touched his sharp knees, and disappeared the next moment through the tall folding-doors which led from the reception-room into her mother's own apartment.

"But, *mon Dieu*, what does she mean?" said Willamowski, after a short pause, during which Aurelia's black eyes had highly enjoyed his amazed air. "For heaven's sake, Miss Aurelia, don't laugh, but tell me what it means?"

Aurelia shrugged her white shoulders.

"I fear your part is played out, dear Willamowski—at least for a time. You will have to add this *illusion perdue* to the others."

"*Ah bah*," said the lieutenant.

"Do you smoke, dear Willamowski?" asked Aurelia.

"Why do you ask?"

"Don't you see, Willamowski, that charming embroidery, evidently intended for a cigar-holder!—silver and blue on a neutral ground—our colors, Willamowski—that is nice and significative, *n'est-ce pas*," and the reckless girl displayed Camilla's work in the bright noonday sun.

"But Camilla knows as well as you do that I do not smoke."

"Certainly, and therefore this embroidery is not for you."

"But for whom, then? For Cuno?"

"Pshaw! She hates Cuno, I tell you."

"That is what I thought, too. But if it is not Cuno, then——"

"Then it must be somebody else. Seriously speaking, Willamowski, come this way, close to the window, and don't speak quite so loud, or they will hear us. There is something going on here, which I but just begin to suspect. They do not trust me, and they are right, for I hate these secret ways, and I am tired of seeing Camilla always favored at my expense; and I mean, hereafter, to go my own way. As soon as I have found it out, you shall know it, Willamowski, for I like you, because you are a good fellow, who don't mind a couple of louis if you can give a poor girl a pleasure, and because you dance the polka so wonderfully well, and because your new little *Americaine* with the beautiful black horse goes so smoothly. I think you would make an excellent brother-in-law, and I patronize you, therefore, rather than Cousin Cuno, who is growing yellower and more disagreeable every day, and who, besides, would be a bad match. But, as I tell you, at this moment your chances are no better than his; we are looking after somebody else with our love-sick eyes. Time brings counsel. And now get away, or you'll be angry in good earnest, and your lady is knocking her fore-shoes to pieces on the pavement. Apropos of lady! are you really going to exchange her for Brinkman's sorrel? And why was not Brinkman at parade to-day?"

"He is on the sick list; but I know he is sitting with that painter, Kettenberg, before a May-bowl in Catalini's garden."

"*Les scélérats!* You had better go there, too, dear Willamowski and follow the example of my admirers in their happy harmony. Kettenberg is a real blessing for you. He has taught you new figures for your German; he has brought you new receipts for making punch; he has introduced tableaux in our society; *enfin*, he has declared that Camilla is the most beautiful of president's daughters, and that I am the most amiable."

"That you are, upon honor, that you are!" cried the officer, carrying the young lady's hand daintily to his thin lips.

"You too, Willamowski? Have you still illusions to lose?"

The officer of dragoons had hardly taken leave, making much ado with his spurs and his sabre, when the mother swept in from the adjoining room.

"What did he say?" she asked, with a pointed look at the door. "He was here a long time."

"Why did not you ask him yourself? He gave you time," replied Aurelia.

"Is that an answer?" asked mamma, stepping up to the window and looking through her glasses after Willamowski's carriage.

"Why not? If I am not good enough to be entrusted with your secrets, I am too good, in all conscience, to be your spy."

"I believe you are dreaming, Aurelia," said the mother, turning from the window towards the room.

"Oh, dear mamma," said Aurelia with great animation; "I am not quite as dull and as stupid as you think. Or do you imagine I find it all right and proper that it is Camilla, and again and again Camilla, for whom everything is done?—that Camilla may remain at Rheinfeld and worm herself into granduncle's favor, while I have to stay here in town, and am at best permitted to execute all your commissions? Do you imagine I do not know what it means, when Camilla sends off all her admirers, one by one, and makes cigar-holders with our colors——"

The young girl was going to say much more, but her voice was smothered by the tears, which came very easily when the topics under consideration were not suited for extravagant laughter. She threw herself into a corner of the sofa and pressed her face into the cushions.

The daughter's sobs were a signal for the mother to break out in tears.

"That is the reward of my kindness," she said, sinking into an arm-chair and holding her handkerchief to her eyes; "nothing but care and anxiety and ingratitude—poor me, unhappy woman that I am!"

"And I won't submit to it," sobbed Aurelia from her corner; "I'll marry the first one who offers. Nobody minds what I do."

"Poor me! My children will bring me into the grave," sobbed the president's wife behind her lace handkerchief.

"Ahem, ahem!" said somebody, who had entered unnoticed by the ladies, and favored by the thick rug on which he now stood in the centre of the room, directly under the chandelier. "Ahem!"

The ladies started up.

"Ah, doctor, is it you?" exclaimed the mother, smiling through her tears, and offering the little man her fat hand, covered with rings, in which she still held her handkerchief. "You come just in time!"

"So I see," said the doctor, kissing the great lady's hand with affected politeness. "The ladies were bursting with laughter! Why, you have tears in your eyes! what on earth was there so very laughable? Well, well, I do not mean to be indiscreet! But, Miss Aurelia, permit me to remind you that you promised me to go down into the garden at this hour, and there to walk about a little in the bright sunshine. We shall come down and join you presently. Make haste, dear Miss Aurelia!"

And the gallant old gentleman kissed his hand to Aurelia, who hastened to take the hint; he then laid aside his hat and his cane and sat down in an arm-chair, close by the president's wife.

Doctor Snapper, physician and member of the provincial government council, was a thin little man, of perhaps sixty, with a smooth-shaven face which was by no means improved by a pair of small gray eyes, searching and cunning, beneath bushy brows, and by the sarcastic smile which was continually playing around his thin compressed lips. The left shoulder of the little man was considerably higher than his right, and perhaps this defect was one of the reasons why the old gentleman took such particular pains with his costume.

Doctor Snapper stroked his thin legs, and taking a pinch from a gold snuff-box, and fixing his piercing gray eyes on the embarrassed face of the corpulent lady, he said:

"What was the matter, madam? Anything of importance?"

"Oh no, dear doctor! Aurelia charges me with favoring Camilla, and such a thing——"

"Is painful, especially when it is true; of course; but you are right; Camilla is an angel. But never mind such childish things. I have a whole budget of news for you."

"Let us hear them, dear Snepper," said the lady, settling comfortably down in her chair. "I am all ear, as usual!"

"In the first place, then," said the little man, smelling his snuff-box, "a bad piece of news; the finances of papa Willamowski are by no means as brilliant as we have been led to believe. I have it from the best authority."

"You don't say so!"

"Hm! You seem to take it very coolly. I only hope Miss Camilla will not cry her pretty eyes out."

"You may be sure of that. But it is astonishing what an instinct I have in such matters. Will you believe me, dear doctor, I said only day before yesterday, at Rheinfeld: 'You will see, Camilla,' said I, 'Stillfried spends too much money, his father cannot stand it long.'"

"You did? Hm! At Rheinfeld you said so, and night before last, just before leaving? Probably the excellency has made some promises? Eh? And our faith in these promises, which will never be kept, gives us this philosophic calmness. Eh?"

The lady smiled with infinite self-complacency, while she stroked the long silken ears of her little spaniel, which had come out from under the sofa, and after stretching his legs, had gone to rest once more in the lap of his mistress.

"You are my friend, Snepper, and Camilla's friend; I can tell you. The old excellency *has* made us promises, great promises. Even more than that; Camilla may consider herself the chief heir, if she fulfils one condition, which indeed—I will be perfectly candid, dear Snepper; you will hear it, after all, and I should like to have your advice on the subject. The condition is, that she should marry her cousin Wolfgang, the alderman's son. Be quiet, Joli!"

Eyes sharper than those of the president's wife, which were not accustomed to observe much from under their heavy eyelids, would have noticed that the doctor's pale face had become several shades paler during these last words.

"Ah!" he said. "Hm! That explains several things.

For instance the alderman's sudden solvency; perhaps also his sudden conversion. And you think the plan can be carried out?"

"*Mais pourquoi pas*, dearest Snepper."

"It might possibly shipwreck on the simple fact that Master Wolfgang will not live many days."

"Great God!" exclaimed the lady, so loud, that Joli in his fright fell from her lap, and in order to vent his wrath upon somebody, savagely barked at the president, who had just come home from a meeting of the Board, and, hat in hand, entered the salon.

"Only think, Philip, Wolfgang—lay your hat aside, don't you see Joli is afraid of the hat—is going to die to-day! There you see why he did not come yesterday to see us. Hush, Joli! you will ruin my nerves completely—ah! poor me! Has the whole world conspired to-day to torment me?"

The president seemed to be somewhat taken aback by this reception. However, not a trace of his feelings was to be perceived in the low tone of his soft voice, as he said to the doctor, taking a seat between him and his wife:

"*Sérieusement*, dear colleague! what is the matter with Wolfgang?"

The doctor had had time, in the meanwhile, to consider that this was by no means the best moment to speak of a certain plan of his, for which the consent of Camilla's parents was essential, and that he must continue to play the part of a friend of the family for some time longer. Besides, it was important first to learn all the details of the plan which the incautious lady had just betrayed to him, and therefore he said with his usual smile:

"*Sérieusement!* the thing is fortunately not quite so serious as your good lady has been pleased to represent it in her maternal anxiety. If I had known before that there exist such very intimate relations between your family and your brother's—which could not be suspected by the uninitiated—I should certainly have taken care not to pain the tender heart of my honored friend. I only spoke of a possibility; by no means of a plausible thing, and least of all of a certainty. Your young and—I must confess—very charming nephew, was night before last attacked by a fever, which was probably the effect of the shock when he suddenly heard

of his mother's illness, combined with a cold he caught during his night journey to town from Rheinfeld in an open carriage. The fever seemed at first to assume a malignant form, but the young man's excellent constitution gives us reason to hope that he will recover in a very short time. His mother is perfectly well again, and nurses him herself. You see, therefore, that if there should be nowhere else an *error in calculo* in your plans, death will certainly not be so rude as to interfere."

"Dear friend," said the president, and his voice sounded softer than ever; "I confess I should not have spoken of the matter—not because I do not trust you, our dear old friend, who thinks exactly as we do——"

Here the two gentlemen bowed most politely to each other; the doctor said, moreover, "Ahem," and took a small pinch.

"But because I do not like to speak of plans and projects which are perfectly uncertain, as is the case here. Pardon me, dear Clotilda, that I am, for once, not of your opinion; but tell me yourself what guaranty have we that it will ever be carried out? A few vague allusions, made by our uncle, which you—I pray you, dear Clotilda, do not become excited!—which you may possibly have valued at more than their actual worth. We do not even know if this Wolfgang, who has been represented to me as a very eccentric young man, has not changed his mind again, or if his low-born relatives in River street do not put their veto upon it. And then, I cannot deny that I do not trust the alderman, although he seems to be stronger than we thought. I have no faith in his solvency. But just think, dear Clotilda!—just think, dear colleague! how horrible our condition would be if the general should drop Wolfgang again, or if the young man, acting under the influence of the plebeian tendencies which he has no doubt inherited from his mother, should abandon us. I shudder at the mere thought."

"Dear Philip," said his wife, who had exhibited various signs of great impatience during her husband's explanation; "I am too much accustomed to see you defeat my plans, to wonder at this moment at your opposition to a project which has unfortunately originated in my head. You know best how cautious, how calm I am, and how little I am inclined to

treat such matters as matters of sentiment ; but here, at least, my maternal heart has something to say. The children love each other ; I am convinced of that. The general is crazy about Wolfgang ; and oh ! Rheinfeld is so beautiful ! The rooms are rather damp and not in the best taste, but that can be easily mended, if we do not mind a few dollars ; and as for myself, I shall find it such a relief to pay a visit to my children in the country, from time to time—but, to be sure, you do not mind whether we are happy or not, or I should think you knew best that our circumstances——”

“What do *you* say, dear colleague?” said the president, placing his hand for a moment lightly on the doctor’s knee.

The little man had appeared to be lost in deep thought during the whole conversation, slowly turning the gold snuff-box between the fore-finger and the thumb of the left hand, and before he could make a reply, the door opened once more—to Joli’s repeated horror and indignation—and in rushed the colonel’s wife, exclaiming even before she had crossed the threshold:

“Well, that is nice, to find you dear ones all together here ! Oh, *mon Dieu !* I have walked so fast, I am quite out of breath ; but I wanted to tell you the great news. Well, guess ! But you can’t guess it, and I will not torment you any longer. Wolfgang is going to be an officer ! Everything is settled. My husband is proud of the success of a plan which he says he has long cherished ; but I was the first to conceive the plan, and I can say that I have taken Wolfgang to my heart the first moment I saw him at Rheinfeld. And just think, our dear good uncle insists upon it that he should enter *our* regiment, and he will provide for his whole equipment. In a few days he will be gazetted as ensign, then they will probably send him to Berlin into the officer manufactory, and next autumn we shall have the pleasure of seeing the new lieutenant once more in our midst. Ah ! but it is hot to-day ! Could you send for a glass of lemonade for me, dearest Clotilda ? But, children, you look quite dumbfounded ! You are not jealous, I hope, that our dear good uncle has written to us about Wolfgang ? Good heavens ! Was it not the most natural thing in the world ? And that is what the alderman said this

morning to my husband—please Florian—ah, your name is Frederick—please, Frederick, order a glass of lemonade for me downstairs—or no, never mind! I must go at once. Good-by, children! and as I said, Clotilda—don't be angry, child—the thing is as simple as it can be. Good-by, dear doctor! console poor Clotilda. By the way, Wolfgang is doing very well; I have just been there. He is a noble fellow. Good-by, children! Good-by, little doctor!"

And off rushed Selma, pursued by Joli with savage barking, leaving the occupants of the room in a state of great excitement. Clotilda broke out in tears; the president walked slowly up and down the room, as he was fond of doing, his hands crossed behind him; and the doctor took a pinch which would have made four under ordinary circumstances.

"To make this man Wolfgang an officer!" he whispered, bending his gray little head on one side.

"Why is that so strange?" asked the lady, evidently irritated.

"Because—but we are nervous, dear friend. Let us break off this conversation; perhaps you would like to take a walk with your daughter. The promenade is crowded with people. The town does not show that we are in the midst of a revolution; and, dearest friend," the doctor walked close up to the president's wife, who had risen in the meantime, and said in a low whisper: "Do not let Aurelia see too plainly that Camilla is our favorite; we might need the young lady's assistance. Good-by! adieu, Joli! *Au revoir!* Ahem! Now I must say good-by to you also, president. We'll see each other to-night at the club, I hope?"

"Hardly! It is my wife's reception-day, you know. I should like to say a few words to you, if you can spare the time; but not here. Pray, let us go into my room; I always feel as if here, in the ladies' rooms, the mirrors and the furniture had eyes and ears."

"I should not mind that—but if they had tongues!" said the doctor, ironically.

The president smiled.

"Well, there would be no danger for you, the most discreet of men; but please take a seat, dear colleague, and now tell me candidly, what do you think of the project?"

"Candidly, Mr. President, I think that, as matters stand, you will have to consent to this highly romantic bargain. No one can possibly be less pleased with this plan than I am ; but I must acknowledge that this time there is more in it than a few pretty soap bubbles, which had their origin in the small brains of the ladies. It is well known that the alderman paid yesterday several notes for very large amounts. Some of them happened to pass through my hands. Where could he have gotten the money, if not from the old gentleman? But if the gray-haired Harpagon opens his strong-box, that means something ; and if the colonel speaks of it as an honor to have the young man in his regiment, and his wife carries the news instantly from house to house—then we can be quite sure that the general means it as a trump card."

"I confess I do not particularly like this plan, which is so very far out of the way of established usage, and looks to me almost like a revolutionary measure," said the president, gently pressing the ends of his long, slender fingers.

"I can readily believe that," replied the doctor. "I also would prefer a more substantial husband for the little one, even if he should be somewhat older than she is."

The little man paused here for a moment, and cast a searching glance at the tall form of the president, who was again walking up and down with long strides. As the latter made no reply to this remark, he continued in a slightly irritated tone :

"Camilla is a clever girl, and ought to choose wisely. Aurelia will, if I am not mistaken, provide the necessary amount of trouble which must be in every good family."

"You frighten me, my dear sir," said the president, pausing in his walk, "by talking so lightly of such serious matters. Have you any communication to make concerning Aurelia?"

"Oh, no ! By no means," said the doctor. "My opinion of Miss Aurelia is formed rather upon physiological facts, than from moral reasons. The young lady has a lively disposition. She resembles in this respect her beautiful aunt Antonia. *A propos*, Mr. President, have you heard the last extravagant exploit of the charming widow?"

"Again?" sighed the president ; "that woman will make me desperate yet with her follies !"

"Then you have not heard that night before last, during the riot, the rabble was beginning to break her windows, and that Munzer prevented the danger and was rewarded for his gallantry by a delightful little supper *tête-à-tête*? You never heard of all this?"

"Only that there had been some disturbance before her house; but not a word of Munzer's interference. I am very much obliged to you for this information; the matter seems to be somewhat important. A supper, you say, and *tête-à-tête*? But how did you hear it?"

"The beautiful widow told me so herself, only half an hour ago, with all the details, and evidently to her own great amusement."

"With all the details?" whispered the president.

The two gentlemen looked into each other's eyes for a moment with a peculiar meaning in their glance.

"But what could have induced her to tell the secret to you?" began the president once more.

"Because it is no longer a secret, since the colonel, your brother, brutally interrupted the *tête-à-tête*—at eleven o'clock—when other people go to bed—it is outrageous!"

"Did she tell you that, too?"

"No! not she, but her valet Jean, who—he is a malicious creature—did not send away the unwelcome visitor, and therefore was sent away himself the same night. The poor devil, who happens to be one of my clients, came this morning to see me, and to tell me of his misfortune. He wanted another place very badly."

"And could you get him one?"

"Not for the present. Just now I know of no family where I could recommend the man!"

"Then send him to me!"

"To you?"

"Yes, my dear sir. Where is your far-famed ingenuity to-day? Do you not see that Chance has shuffled our cards so well in this matter, we could not have done better ourselves."

"I confess, to my shame, that I only suspect your combination. My head is a little weak this morning, and then—this strange project, your charming Camilla—such a fabulous connection——"

"Pshaw!" said the president, smiling; "that family matter must for the moment give way to affairs of state. The thing is not pressing, besides; but in a week the elections take place, and I think we should both of us find it uncomfortable if Munzer became our minister. Don't you think so?"

The little doctor beat his forehead.

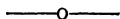
"Oh! how stupid I was! To be sure, to be sure! the thing is of importance. But what do you mean to do?"

The president smiled.

"That I do not know yet myself. I only know that Munzer is a poet and an enthusiast; which means, he can be tempted, and Antonia is the most seductive of sirens. But there is my carriage coming for me. I am going to see the governor; will you accompany me part of the way? We can consider, on our way, how the thing is to be managed. But, before I forget it, send me that man Jean to-day! will you?"

"Certainly!"

"*Eh bien*, let us go then! Pray, pray, after you!"



CHAPTER II.

IT was a few hours later, when the president's carriage drove up River street and stopped before Peter Schmitz's house. The servant jumped down from the box and opened the door; the president stepped out, casting a passing glance at the old, weather-beaten escutcheon with the illegible inscription over the front-door, and at the sign-board over the windows of the first story, on the left, on which was inscribed in very legible and, as the president thought, almost impudent letters: "Office of the People's Journal." Cool as he was, the president could yet not quite overcome a certain superstition and uncomfortable sensation, as he ordered the coachman to drive off if he did not come out again in five minutes. Suppose he should never come out again! It would not have been the first horror that had come to the family from this grim old house; although the

last came in the shape of a beautiful girl—a girl almost as beautiful as the one now looking out of the bay-window. The president raised his hat almost involuntarily; the young girl bowed slightly, and disappeared from the window. The president entered the house.

“The office of the People’s Journal is upstairs, first turn to the right,” proclaimed a paper pasted on the wall, on which, besides, a gigantic hand with extended fore-finger pointed up the fragile staircase which led to a gallery. There, at various places, additional copies of the same gigantic hand guided the visitor “To the Editor’s office.” The president went cautiously, as if he feared the creaking boards might break under him, down the gallery; and the uncomfortable feeling which had overcome him at his entrance into the house, grew stronger every moment. He did not remember ever in his life to have seen such a strange house. He wondered what the immense hall could mean?—whether the whole building would come down if the great pillar that supported the ceiling in the centre of the hall were taken out? The old legend of Samson, the ill-treated, insulted slave, whose blind, desperate strength destroyed a whole generation of his insolent masters by one great effort, came into his mind—an uncomfortable reminiscence here in the house of Peter Schmitz, the fanatical demagogue. The president paused for a moment, it was so supernaturally quiet in the large deserted hall; only through the wide-open windows in the rear wall a steady rushing and roaring sounded up from the court-yard—the printing presses were at work there on the evening edition of the People’s Journal, perhaps on one of those sharp articles, steeped in bitterest satire, and entitled, “*In Præsidentem*,” which for the last few days had exposed his official administration with pitiless criticisms. The president found out suddenly that his plan, which led him almost unprepared into the very midst of the enemy’s camp, had perhaps been formed too rashly, and—there the carriage drove off! Stupid fellows! they have not waited two minutes! But should he give it up now? Why not? He could not find the editor’s room! He had not met anybody yet! The young girl at the window had probably hardly noticed him.

At the moment when the president was on the point of

turning back and of escaping with long, cautious steps, one of the low doors on the gallery opened, and out came an elderly lady, dressed in black like the young lady at the window, an embroidery pattern in her hand, and wearing around her neck a long skein of blood-red knitting yarn. As she was going towards the front rooms, and the gigantic hand pointed towards the rear, the president did not see how he could escape meeting her, unless he meant to run away altogether. He thought it wisdom, therefore, to look around him searchingly, and to notice the lady at the instant when she was only a step or two from him. He did so ; he stepped aside, and raising his hat he said very politely :

"Ah, madam ! Perhaps you can tell me if this is the way to Doctor Munzer's office ? "

Aunt Bella stopped and fixed her piercing eyes with such a peculiar sharp expression upon the new-comer, that the latter involuntarily took off his hat altogether, as if he meant by this manœuvre to induce the lady's dark eyes to assume a less annoying expression. But the dark eyes looked only sharper than ever at him, and there was no sweetness in Aunt Bella's voice, when she at last replied :

"The editor's office is at the end of the gallery, Mr. President."

"Ah !" said Baron Hohenstein, with a graceful inclination. "I have the honor of being known to you ?"

"If you do not object to my knowing how my brother-in-law's brother looks, yes !"

"Then I have the pleasure of addressing Miss Schmitz ?"

"Arabella Schmitz ! yes, Mr. President. I am afraid you will find no one at the office but Doctor Holm. Doctor Munzer is apt to come late on Tuesdays ; can I perhaps deliver your message ?"

At these words Aunt Bella's dark eyes looked more searching than ever. "I am very much obliged to you, Miss Schmitz ; but I prefer seeing Doctor Munzer myself ; if you permit me, I will wait a while in the office."

"As you like !" said Aunt Bella, and left him with an almost imperceptible bow of the head.

"*Incidit in Scyllam !*" murmured the latter, forced now to go on. "What an impertinent, diabolical woman ! I wish I were outside again ! Ah ! there is the door at last ! Doc-

tor Holm? Oh, we were fellow-students, I believe, at Heidelberg. Have not seen him for many years. I suppose the acquaintance must be renewed."

"Walk in!"

It was a deep, strange, bass voice that had called out: "Walk in!" and a strange figure it was, too, which the president, when he entered, found sitting in the office on a little table near the second window, and with his back to the entrance door: a large, broad-shouldered man, with a huge, massive head, thickly covered with black, curly hair. As he looked round at his visitor, he showed the latter a deadly-pale face, set in a jet-black beard, incredibly savage-looking, with a pair of piercing, bloodshot eyes. The man wore, in spite of the summerly spring day, a coarse, heavy frieze-coat, and, as if to make amends for it, trousers of unbleached linen. Around his muscular, bare neck, a blood-red cotton handkerchief was loosely tied, and in his ears he wore small brass rings.

"I wish to see Doctor Munzer," said the president.

"Not here yet!" replied the man in the frieze-coat; "very busy when he is here!"

"I suppose so; and I do not mean to detain him long. My name is President Hohenstein; with whom have I the honor?"

The president had given his name, partly because he thought he read in the piercing look of the small black, bloodshot eyes a peremptory summons to explain himself, and partly because he had for years been accustomed to command respect from inferior people by announcing his rank. The long-tried charm seemed, however, to have lost its power in this case—perhaps even to have the opposite effect. For the pale, bearded man made a strange grimace, and a short, hoarse chuckle came from the depths of his throat. He stared at the president, and then looked at his proof-sheet, with which he was busy; then once more at the president, like a detective who wishes to establish the identity of a specially precious criminal by the most careful comparison of the original with his description in a printed placard. Finally, as if he was quite sure of his case, he plunged into his work again.

The president repented more than ever his rashness,

which had brought him into so painful a position. He felt as if the air of the room, filled with the odor of fresh printing ink and damp paper, must stifle him—as if the walls would crumble down and smother him—as if the parrots and cockatoos on the wall-paper, with their huge beaks, were making fun of him. At last his eye rested on a sheet of paper, posted on a false door, on which the story of the master of the house who goes out after the cats at night, was illustrated in a series of comic pictures. The words, “Blind zeal is hurtful,” which were printed on it in large letters, seemed to him to contain an unsuspected depth of wisdom. The man in the frieze-coat seemed to ignore him completely; he was bending over his work; nevertheless the president could hardly bear his presence. He was too odd looking, in all conscience. He wrote with his left hand, evidently very awkwardly and with a great effort; his powerful frame shook constantly as if in high fever; and on his face feverish glow and spectral pallor chased each other in rapid succession. At the same time he groaned and wailed very low, like a man suffering cruel pains, and then again he would utter his short, hoarse laugh, like one who reads a ludicrous book and does not mean to disturb others by his own hilarity.

“Would you like to look at the leader in the evening edition?”

The man in the frieze-coat offered the president the proof-sheet, which he had just corrected. The latter, after having read the ingenious fable of the cats six times over, had been walking up and down the room with cautious steps, and was not a little startled at the expression in the man’s face at that moment, so that he staggered back and made a declining gesture.

“Well, as you like it,” said the man, grinning; “but the article is well written; and as for the subject, there have been worse counterfeits.”

And the man took up a second proof-sheet, and began to correct again.

“I’ll not stay a moment longer,” said the president to himself; “not for a million.”

At the moment when the president was laying his hand on the door-knob, a step was heard outside on the wooden

gallery—the step of a man who puts down one foot very tenderly, and the other very firmly, and keeps pace accurately with a stout cane. A tolerably good bass voice sang :

“ In these sacred halls
Vengeance is unknown—”

Then, without previous inquiry, the door was pushed open, and in walked Doctor Holm, in one hand his broad-brimmed yellow straw-hat and his cane, and in the other a red-silk handkerchief, with which he was going to wipe the beads of perspiration from his heated forehead and his bald crown. But he forgot the operation in his astonishment at the appearance of his old fellow-student, who was now his bitter political adversary. The presence of the latter in the editor's office was certainly startling enough, especially for Doctor Holm, whose humane conscience smote him with the recollection that to-day's evening edition of the People's Journal would contain one of his most denunciatory articles, *In Præsidentem*. But Doctor Holm possessed in a high degree the talent not to be overcome by circumstances, and thus he waved his broad-brimmed straw-hat with a bold motion of his arm, and said :

“Greetings ! most illustrious man, and heartily welcome !”

“I see the years have done no injury to the lively humor of my fellow-student at the university,” replied the president, with his most courteous smile, feeling himself much relieved by this cordial greeting.

“Thanks be the gods who in mercy have granted me patience !” said Doctor Holm. “But will you please sit down, Mr. President, and tell me what procures me the honor of your visit ?”

“Thanks, thanks !” whispered the president, without accepting the cane-bottom chair which Doctor Holm offered him with his usual majestic gesture. “Much as I should like to have a long conversation with my old university friend, my time is too much occupied to allow me to do more than to mention my request very briefly, and to beg him to repeat it kindly to his colleagues. For reasons which I cannot very well explain”—here the president glanced at the man in the frieze-coat—“I am exceedingly anxious to have an interview with Doctor Munzer. I would call on him at his lodgings,

but I fear I should be as unsuccessful there as I have been here. I should wish you, therefore, to ask him to grant me an interview this evening at my house ; or, if he prefers it, to appoint another time and another place, just as he likes best. Will you, dear doctor ? ”

“ Excuse me a moment, Mr. President,” Doctor Holm said, interrupting the smooth-tongued statesman, “ but God’s service before man’s service, and if the leading article—how is it, Cajus, have you reviewed and revised it, the lovely leader, leader-*orum* ? ”

“ Here,” said the man in the frieze-coat, turning half round on his chair and holding out with his left hand the sheet which he had before in vain offered the president.

The immense hands which held the little sheet of paper trembled, and the ashy-pale face was covered with large drops of perspiration.

“ For God’s sake ! ” cried Holm, seizing with the paper the hand also ; “ you look dreadful ! What is the matter ? ”

“ I fell coming up the steps, and I think I must have broken my right arm,” murmured Cajus.

“ Man, are you mad ? ” cried Doctor Holm, who had turned almost as pale as the man in the frieze-coat, “ and you have been sitting here for a whole hour in such a state ? ”

A grim smile flitted across the face of the sufferer.

“ The gentlemen would have had to correct their proofs themselves, and I know they can hardly find time for their own work, and ”—his eyes, distorted with pain, shot a venomous glance at the president—“ *this* article I could not leave to anybody else.”

The proof-reader was about to rise, but the motion interfered with the broken arm. The savage pain extorted from the stoic a low wail, and he sank back on his chair fainting.

Doctor Holm rushed to the door which led into the printing room, with a rapidity which one would not have expected from a lame man, tore open the little window, and cried with the whole power of his lungs, “ Help ! help ! ” Then he seized the bell-rope hanging over the editors table and began to ring it violently, crying all the time, “ Help ! ” although the printers, frightened at the uproar, had all

rushed into the room with wonder in their eyes. At the same time the door which led into the hall opened wide, and Aunt Bella rushed in, the pattern still in her hand and the red yarn still around her neck.

"Did I not say so," she cried. "I knew the man would bring some fatality upon this house. What is the matter, Holm?"

"No one must touch him! He has broken his arm!" cried Doctor Holm, as the men were trying to raise the fainting man.

"But, dear Holm, are you in your right mind?" exclaimed Aunt Bella. "We can't let him lie there. Give me a glass of water! Lehman, you run for the doctor! Tell him to come instantly! You two, and John—you are a strong man—you carry him into the front room! There, that's it!"

Cajus raised himself a little, looked with confused eyes around him, and his sombre face became still darker.

"I should think it was bad enough if one drops down, but that is no reason why others should run away and leave their work."

He stood up and took the broken arm into his other hand.

"I can go home alone," he said, "if you will please open the door for me."

"Nonsense!" said Aunt Bella. "Go home, forsooth! I should like to know what you want to do at home, where you have neither kith nor kin? We have room enough here, and hands enough. I should not like to see the face brother would make if he were to come back and find out that we had let you go away."

This last argument seemed to make some impression on the strange man. He murmured a few unintelligible words, and then followed Aunt Bella out of the room. Two of the printers went with him, obeying Aunt Bella's energetic signs; the others went back to their work, discussing the event with lively interest. The president and Doctor Holm remained alone.

"Ah!" groaned the latter, sinking suddenly, quite exhausted, into an arm-chair and stretching out his arms and legs. "I shake in all my limbs. That Cajus *Caj-orum* is a man of iron, a very Roman! What do you say, Mr. President? Have you any such heroes in your offices?"

"I am afraid not," replied the president, who had witnessed the whole scene from the furthest corner of the room.

"And a cause in which such men fight, should it not be victorious?" cried Doctor Holm, enthusiastically striking the table. "A cause sustained by men who are not only ready at any moment to face death in defence of their ideas—for *dulce est pro patria mori — mor-orum!*"—again the table was struck violently—"but to break their arm, and with a broken arm to correct the proof of a leading editorial—correct-orum leader-orum!"

"I see you have not lost your old Heidelberg fashion of adding the Latin *orum* here and there!" said the president, turning to the door.

"The gods be thanked!" said Doctor Holm, rising and accompanying his visitor to the door, with that graceful grandezza which he knew how to command at times, in spite of his lameness. "If you had not forgotten it, Mr. President, we should not be compelled to write leader-orum *In Presidentem!*"

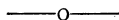
"Ha, ha!" smiled the president. "Very good! Very good! Adieu, dear doctor. You will not forget to tell your colleague!"

"Shall be done! Shall be done!"

"Your obedient servant!"

"Serv-orum, serv-orum!"

"What a fool that man is," murmured the president, hastening with careful steps down the long gallery. "The whole lumbering old house is an insane asylum! Well, if I can only lead the chief fool, that man Munzer, by the nose, I shall not have had my trouble for nothing."



CHAPTER III.

PRESIDENT HOHENSTEIN paused on his way from the office of the People's Journal at the next street corner, apparently undecided in which direction to turn. Then he hailed a passing cab, and ordered the man

to drive to the house of his sister Antonia. He found her on the point of riding out, and was therefore rather ungraciously received ; but the baroness seemed to be anyway in bad humor. The president said he did not mean to detain his fair sister-in-law ; he merely wished to remind her, for himself and in the name of his ladies, that there was a reception to-night at his house. Then he mentioned, quite casually, his adversary Doctor Munzer, who he thought might probably come and take tea there, and then he sighed and said, "If I knew anybody who could win that man over to our side or make him harmless, I—but, *ma chère* Antonia, here I stand and chat and pretend not to see how you bite your beautiful lips from annoyance, and not to hear how your horse is pawing the pavement. Good-by ! Don't come too late, and don't therefore ride too far !"

The president smiled, bowed, smiled again and disappeared, touching as he passed the long, slim neck of Antonia's horse with the tip of his fore-finger, and then walked down the narrow, crowded streets, keeping his long, slender hands folded behind his long, slender back. Although apparently never raising his eyes from his well-fitting varnished boots, he yet evidently noticed everything that was going on around him. He returned the salutation of the lowest mechanic, and gave a large piece of money to a boy standing in tears over a broken pitcher, the work of his awkward hands. It is true, a crowd of old women were surrounding the poor boy, who had been scolded and admonished by them for the last quarter of an hour, and so he said, for their benefit rather than for the boy's : "If your father asks you where you got the money, you can say, President Hohenstein gave it to you." In another street he stepped aside to let a procession pass by on its way to church, and remained standing there with uncovered head, till the last mourner had disappeared in the door—an attention which was highly applauded by many bystanders, most of whom knew the president by sight and were perfectly well aware that neither he nor his family were fortunate enough to be members of the great church in which alone salvation is to be found.

Thus scattering right and left the cheap seed of precious popularity, the president reached a more quiet portion of

the town. He had not seen this street for a long time—so very long indeed, that it looked quite strange to him. And yet he had been here often enough years ago. In a house which turned its tall, narrow gable end upon a little plat of grass, surrounded on the other two sides by dismal convent buildings, a marvellously pretty girl used to live in those days high up in the fourth story ; the young man had been desperately in love with her, and she, on her side, had loved the elegant, tall young man even more passionately still. The president paused for a moment to look across at the gable-end, and he recollected that on that same spot, and about thirty years ago, he had said good-by to his brown-eyed Agatha, as he was going to leave town the next morning on his way to Berlin. He said it was only in order to stand his examination there for promotion, and then to return ; but in reality he knew that he should stay away years and years. The poor girl had cried bitterly. He had never seen her again, and did not even know what had become of her ; a report had reached him, it is true, that the poor girl had fallen into evil ways, and died afterwards in the charity hospital connected with the university in a neighboring town. It was not an altogether pleasant remembrance, and the president did not dwell upon it ; he had more important things to do, and hastened his steps till he reached the wider street, in which he knew he should find his brother's house. It was a silent, melancholy street ; one side was taken up with the high wall of the convent-yard, over which immense old trees stretched out their branches, here dead and withered, and there covered with new and tender foliage. The buildings on the other side were mostly three-story houses ; and as the walls were, without exception, covered with creepers and vines, they looked so much like each other that the president, after some search, thought it best to obtain information about the alderman's house from a lady in mourning who was just coming out from one of these houses, and at that moment turning her back to him. When he began : " May I beg, madam—" the lady turned round, and the president recognized to his surprise the handsome young girl whom he had seen an hour ago in the side-window of Peter Schmitz's house. The very attractive face of the girl bore evident traces of pain or consternation, and the presi-

dent thought that the large blue eyes had shed tears quite recently.

"Ah, beg pardon, but I think I had the pleasure this afternoon of meeting you before ; pardon my curiosity, but I am a near relative of the Schmitz family, and should like to know whom I have the honor of addressing. My name is Hohenstein, President Hohenstein."

And the president bowed gracefully, holding his hat over his right ear.

"My name is Ottilia Schmitz," said the young girl, into whose face the blood had rushed abruptly when the president gave his name.

The near relative of the Schmitz family was by no means sufficiently at home in the genealogy of that honorable race to be quite satisfied with this brief statement. He said, therefore : "Ah, indeed ! Miss Ottilia Schmitz ? I remember. And you have had a sad loss in your family, Miss Schmitz ?"

"My father !" replied Ottilia, with increasing embarrassment.

"Oh !" said the president. "How sad ! Your father ! But I am detaining you unwarrantably ! I hope to have the pleasure very often——"

The president made way for her with a low bow ; and Ottilia, scarcely able to return the courtesy, hurried off with downcast eyes and flushing cheeks.

"Hm !" murmured the president, "pretty girl ! Ottilia Schmitz, niece or something of the kind of my excellent sister-in-law, probably soon to be connected with us in another way, besides. I must inquire into this. Clotilda has, as usual, committed herself again too rashly. It is high time I should take the matter into my own hands. At all events this is the house ; there is the name on the door-plate !"

The president rang the bell and inquired if the alderman was at home.

"Good gracious, Mr. President," cried stupid Ursula, who had years ago been a servant in the president's house, and knew all about the dissensions in the family. "Well now ! won't the alderman be glad ! Please walk into his room, Mr. President, I will run up and tell them you are here !"

"But I do not wish to interrupt——"

"Good gracious ! Interrupt ! Please walk in, Mr. President !"

Ursula almost pushed the president into her master's room on the right-hand side, and closed the door behind him. The president looked curiously around him ; he had never been at his brother's house since his marriage, and had rarely or never thought of his brother's household, but had always imagined it small, insignificant, and poverty-stricken. He was quite surprised, therefore, to find just the contrary. Carpets on the floor, somewhat old-fashioned but comfortable, and even costly furniture ; damask curtains before the windows, fine engravings and excellent casts on the frescoed walls. His own private office did not look more elegant. "Yes, we Hohensteins have taste," he said to himself ; "blood tells ; one does not degenerate so easily, I see. Hm ! hm ! It might not be so bad after all—if the old man only were safe——"

The alderman's writing-table, covered with documents and papers, attracted the president's attention. An open letter, written in awkward characters, lay so that a man endowed, as the president was, with good eyes, could read it comfortably at some distance.

"Is that it?" murmured the president, quickly stepping back from the writing-table and appearing absorbed in the admiration of a picture at the other end of the room ; "Clotilda has for once guessed right ! That alters the case, of course ! Ah, here you are, dear brother ! I am so glad to find you alone ; we must have some talk with each other ! " The president had advanced to meet his brother with outstretched arms, but he paused almost involuntarily as he noticed the alderman's pale and haggard appearance.

"Great heavens, Arthur, are you sick ? I will not trouble you !"

"Oh no ! By no means ! I am tired, that is all," replied the alderman, smiling with pallid lips, and taking his brother's hands. "I am glad, very glad to see you here. But won't you sit down ? You anticipate me. I intended to give myself the pleasure of calling on you this evening. Important family affairs ; I do not know what you will think of them, but——"

"First of all, dear brother," said the president, interrupting him, and dropping into the comfortable sofa, "tell me how you all are. How is your wife? How is Wolfgang?"

"Better, better! I may say, quite well! We have just had a consultation, in which your name has been frequently mentioned."

"Dear Arthur," said the president, bending over and placing his hand lightly on his brother's arm; "let us speak to each other frankly, and as it becomes brothers. We have been somewhat foolishly estranged from each other for many years, but I think we shall understand each other again as we did once upon a time, when you and I sat upon the same bench at school, and you, though my junior by two years, used to correct my tasks. You were the cleverer of the two, and you would have risen high if you had stood by us as you ought to have done. Let me finish, dear brother! It was just because I thought so highly of your talents, and because I knew that you might be the pride of the family if you chose—it was this which hurt me so deeply when you took a course which necessarily removed you farther and farther from us. How deep my sorrows had been, I only found out when I measured it by the joy I felt at being able the other night to embrace you at the City Hall before all the people, as the man who had saved the town. Dear Arthur, let us make amends for what we have neglected, as far as it is in our power! How perfectly I confide in you, you may judge from the fact that I come to-day with a petition, or at least asking for information. To make the matter short, my wife has told me a long story about a silent attachment which Camilla has formed during her stay at Rheinfeld for your Wolfgang, and which she thinks is returned by him. I have of course said nothing to the child about it, and shall not do it until I know what is the truth of the matter. It has greatly surprised me, as you can guess. This is my reason for coming here. Has your son spoken to you about it? or your wife? for women are wonderfully sharp-sighted in such matters! You see what confidence I place in you! I hope you will treat me as well!"

"Then you have received no letter from uncle?" inquired the councillor.

"From uncle? Not a word!" said the president.

"And you do not know that uncle has taken Wolfgang's future in his own hand?—that Wolfgang is going to give up the law and will enter the army, in Gisbert's regiment?"

"Not a word of it!" replied the president with admirably feigned surprise.

"Then allow me to read you this letter, which I received this morning from uncle," replied the alderman, rising and taking the old gentleman's letter from his writing-table.

"I am all ears," said the president, and heard the letter read with all the signs of deepest interest; of course his brother omitted the last lines, which were not particularly flattering for the president.

"Well, that is news indeed!" said the latter, as the alderman locked up the letter in one of the drawers of his table; "but, dearest brother, what does Wolfgang say? what does your wife say?"

"I can only tell you that Wolfgang is in love with Camilla; he has confessed it to my wife and to myself. As to uncle's project about his future career, he has some scruples about that; but I think he will give way if the main thing is only right."

"And I think we agree on that!" said the president, with a cunning smile, offering his hand to his brother.

The alderman seized it with warm enthusiasm.

"Can it really be?" he said. "Are we, who have been at variance for so many years, really to meet once more in the evening of our lives?"

"Do not say the evening of our lives," said the president, smiling. "My dear brother, we are not yet at meridian height; we can and we will rise higher, if we hold to each other."

"I don't know," replied the alderman. "I feel less strong than formerly. I seem to have lost all elasticity."

The alderman passed his hand over his forehead and his eyes.

"Well, well!" said the president. "You have overworked yourself, dear brother. If anybody has a right to be tired, it is you. But your great merits are appreciated. I met the chief burgomaster last night at General Hinkel's. He considers your unanimous election as city treasurer quite certain. He told me all about your romantic transfer of the

treasure; very good! excellent! I should have liked to have seen you both at it!"

The alderman laughed, but his laugh passed into a dry cough.

He rose: "I believe my chest is weak. I must consult Doctor Snepper."

"You have become a hypochondriac, dear brother," said the president, also rising. "And no wonder. You have lived outside of your natural sphere, and that is never wholesome. But all that will be changed now. I also have had my cares, and have them still. A poor government official, and especially a high one, is badly off. I hope our children will do better. I hope I may say our children?"

"Dear brother!" said the alderman, opening his arms.

"But now I must go," said the president, after a silent embrace. "I have a world of business to finish to-day. And then, to-night is Clotilda's reception! You ought to come. Young officers! pretty girls! . . . *Apropos* of pretty girls; who was that little damsel in mourning who left your house just as I came in?"

"A niece of my wife," said the alderman. "The daughter of her brother in Thuringia, who died a few days ago. My wife has a marvellous attachment to her family—very inconvenient. I was just discussing that chapter with her when you came."

The president laughed. "It must be particularly inconvenient just now. Well, well; that will all be arranged *peu à peu*. Not a step further, dear brother! *Au revoir!*"

"He looks really wretched, *mon cher frère!*" murmured the president, walking down Convent street with long, careful strides. "I can well believe he won't last many years more. Well, that is settled! I have a good head for that kind of business. Clever, was it not? that I pretended to know nothing. Now I have only to put a ring in the nose of my democratic bear, so that he must, *nolens volens*, dance to my piping! Six o'clock! How time flies! Cab! The president's house!"

CHAPTER IV.

BERNHARD MUNZER had experienced more than once in his life that the best cure for a suffering heart is some work which requires the utmost activity of the brain ; but he had never felt it as much as in these last days. Once more he stood before one of the enigmas of his enigmatic life—before a sphinx who had smiled at him, at first, with her sweetest mien, only to grin at him, the next moment, with a diabolic face. The old mirage of his imagination, how often it had delighted, disgusted, or mocked him ! How he had struggled to clear up all these doubts in his heart, in the great world ! His proud, powerful heart, his deep, clear intellect—all he had he brought to bear upon his innate desire to do something great for this world in which he lived, for these men among whom he moved ! To this one great purpose of his life he had pitilessly sacrificed the fairest flowers of his imagination. He had torn from his shoulders the soft and pleasing garments of the master, and wrapped himself up in the rags of the slave. In the service of his ideal, in the service of humanity, he had done the work of a slave, and what had it all availed ? The discord in his soul was not appeased ! He had not yet learnt humility, moderation, and patience ! And this free, fraternal humanity was and remained a cruel, coarse heathen idol, which saw its slaves working with their shoulders to the wheel, ruthlessly slain, or scoffingly hurled into the abyss, by its own priests, and never moved an eye-lid. And even that he might have borne, but his strength was giving way gradually, and he felt it ebb. He felt that disgust rose higher and higher in his breast, and threatened to master his enthusiasm. But no, no ! A thousand times, no ! Your enemies waiting for your downfall—they shall not boast of their triumph ! No human hand shall feel how your heart beats more and more slowly ! No human eye shall read a complaint in your eye, a sign of grief for long-lost happiness !

No human hand ? Not even that hand into which you once placed your own for life-long union ? No human eye ? Not even that eye which hangs on you with a love which is

omniscient because it is infinite?—which discerns every cloud that passes over your brow as soon as it rises on the horizon and follows it with secret tears?—not even your wife's eye?

You hope so ; for you would be unhappier still if you could not hope so. And who tells you that you may hope so? The pain that makes her lips curl so often, those lips which do not perhaps overflow with wit and brilliant words, but which always speak truth and never yet uttered a hard, unkind word, but many a piece of good advice and many a word of heartfelt comfort!—lips which might have given you much more yet that was sweet and dear, if you had known how to open the seals which the highest excitement and the deepest emotion alike seemed to place upon them ! No, Munzer, you cannot hope that you can conceal from your wife your sorrow-stricken heart, with all its heavy burdens.

Away, ye spectres ! Work, sacred work, that scatters the ghosts of grief and relieves man from his burdens, come to me ! Work, the friend of my joyless youth ! Work, that has so often rescued me from the jaws of despair ! Thou goddess in the dusty garment of hair-cloth, with the firmly-compressed lips and the sadly-frowning brow ! Thou to whom as a boy I vowed allegiance, help me to bear the heavy burden of life to the end !

“Are you going already, Bernhard?” asked Clara, when Munzer, after having written for several hours during the afternoon, threw down his pen, arranged his papers and rose ; “you did not use to go so early on Tuesdays.”

“I have to go,” replied Munzer, in an absent way, “these are hard times for us.”

“Poor Bernhard !” said Clara, coming up to her husband and placing her hand upon his arm ; “you have such hard work to do.”

“Don't you work hard, too?” replied Munzer, beginning to open his papers again ; “but leave me, Clara ; you know I do not like to be interrupted just before going out ; it makes me forget the most important things.”

Clara left him, waiting patiently till Munzer should turn again towards her. But he never turned round again ; he

rose, went straight to the chair on which his hat was lying, and was on the point of going out, when Clara said gently :

“ You have forgotten something unimportant, Bernhard ? ”

“ What is that ? ”

“ To say good-by ! ”

“ Good-by, Clara ! ”

Munzer offered Clara his hand, smiling. She flew into his arms, and put her head on his bosom ; but instantly she tore herself away again ; and as she turned from Munzer to the window, he saw that her eyes were filled with tears.

Munzer seemed to hesitate for a moment whether he should go or stay, then he laid his hat and his papers on a chair, walked up to Clara and said :

“ Why do you cry, Clara ? ”

Clara turned half round and tried to smile.

“ Oh, it is nothing, it just happens so. ”

“ You are not happy, Clara ! ”

“ I am happy, if you are so, and—you are so, I trust ? ”

Munzer's forehead clouded up.

“ The old story ! ”

“ The old story ! ” repeated Clara, “ because the subject is ever new ! ”

“ You only add new chapters ! ”

“ I am not an author, Bernhard ! I do not invent your cares and your sorrows and your sleepless nights. All that is but too real. ”

“ And is it your fault ? ”

“ Somewhat ! You ought not to have married me. You ought to be free. You have something else to do than to provide for wife and children. You would perhaps not be happier then, but you would be less unhappy. ”

Clara said this so quietly, so calmly, Munzer felt as if his soul was lying perfectly open before his wife's calm clear eye. He could not and would not deny it ; he could only say,

“ And does this make us happier ? ”

“ I do not know, Bernhard ; but you have taught me yourself that there ought to be no secret between us. It would have been better if I had understood that sooner. Or rather, I understood it, but—you know I cannot always say what I wish to say. ”

“ It would have been better ! ” said Munzer in a sad voice,

"yes indeed, but perhaps you are not alone to be blamed for it ; perhaps I also ought to have been more candid. Let us be wiser in future. We mean well, both of us, and do not let us make our troubles greater than they are ; time will take care of that. Good-by, Clara, all may be right yet."

He drew his wife to his heart and kissed her. Then he left the room without looking round again.

Clara tottered, nearly fainting, to the sofa, and hiding her face in her hands, gave vent to her sorrow in a torrent of tears. Seeing her weep thus, her whole body heaving and trembling with her passionate grief, one might have asked in amazement, if that was the same Clara whose calm, quiet manner and even temper were proverbial among her acquaintances?

After a while she made a violent effort, dried her tears, which flowed less from grief than passion, and gazed fixedly before her, resting her head in her hand.

"All may be right yet!" she murmured ; "and how he said that ! He does not believe it himself. Why should he be right yet, if he loves me ? How can it be right yet if he does not love me ? And he does not love me ; he never did love me as he can love ! He does not even love his children ! We are a burden to him, which he bears because he has to do it—because he is too proud to confess that his marriage was a blunder. But I am not less proud. They are my children as much as they are his. We will no longer be a burden to him ! He shall be free again as he was before ; he shall no longer be hampered in his plans and in his work ; he shall no longer waste his strength on us. We will make way for him—we will go so far from him that even the remembrance of us shall not be a burden to him."

And again, as she dwelt on these most painful thoughts that a wife's heart can harbor, again she broke out in floods of tears.

"But can he forget us entirely ?—forget all we have experienced and suffered together ? Can he really find one who understands him better than I do ?—who can love him better than I have done and still do ? No ! and a thousand times, no ! It is not possible for us to part. And if I were to endure everything for his sake—would that make him happier ? Can he be happy without me ? Would he not want

me back when it is too late?—when he sees that no one can love him as truly as I did?—when he sees that those who surround him in prosperity will leave him in adversity? And if he then should want me—if he were lying sick and forlorn, and I had to admit that it was my pride which parted us—that he would have kept me near him and loved me after all, perhaps, if I had only been wiser and more modest—oh God, oh God! what must I do? what must I do?”

And the unhappy young wife raised her arms to heaven, like a drowning man who feels his strength give way, and knows that the next moment the dark abyss is to swallow him up forever.

Just then joyous voices of children were heard in the adjoining room: “Mamma! mamma! Where are you, mamma?”

Charles and Ella were coming home from school. They wanted their bread and butter.

Clara pressed her handkerchief on her eyes, that the children might not see the traces of tears.

“Here, children!”

“Ah, here is mamma!” cried Charlie, running up to his mother. “I am so hungry! I met papa; at first he did not see me; then I crept up to him and frightened him nicely.”

“That was not right, Charlie!”

“But papa was not angry at all. He asked me if I had good marks, and when I said ‘the best in school,’ he said, ‘That’s right, and give my love to mamma;’ and then he kissed me—but mamma, I am so hungry!”

“Directly, child, directly.”

“But you are crying, mamma?”

“How you talk, child! I suppose something is in my eye!”

“Yes, mamma, I met somebody, too!” said Ella. “Uncle Peter! and Uncle Peter says he is coming round this evening with Aunt Bella, and you are to take a walk with them. May we go too?”

“If you have done your tasks and it is not too late.”

While Clara tried to drown the deadly grief for a lost Eden, which had never yet overwhelmed her so completely, her husband dragged himself through the narrow, winding streets with their stunted bits of sunshine, on the old familiar

way to the office. The meeting with his boy had reminded him once more of things which he wished to forget, and which he must forget if he wanted to do his day's work well. As the little fellow had looked up to him with his joyous, innocent face, he had felt with a shudder that it required an effort in him to answer the boy kindly. He had felt no joy, no pleasure; he had felt only as if the chords in his heart had been torn, and could no longer utter a sound.

"That is right," he murmured to himself, as he walked slowly on, never raising his eyes from the pavement. "Be quiet, Clara; if I cannot love you as you wish to be loved, and deserve to be loved, it is certainly not because I love anybody else. That beautiful woman, night before last, looked at me with her triumphant eyes, that said clearly, 'You are mine, you may struggle as you choose!' You triumphed too soon, fair lady! It is nothing but the old dream again—and I am freeing myself of the bonds of dreams as I am making myself free of other bonds which I have assumed in my folly. What is it they say of the bitter hatred which we must vow against the world if we wish to follow the Saviour, who has made the world free? I will follow the summons that has come to me; I will not look to the right or the left. It is my fate, I cannot do otherwise."

Thus, lost in vague thoughts which brought him neither comfort nor clearness of mind, Munzer at last reached the old house in River street. He drew a long breath as he crossed the threshold. A heavy load fell from his soul. There was work, pitiless, and yet benevolent work; the furies that clung to his heels vanished in the air.

In the office he found Doctor Holm, still very much excited by the events of the afternoon. Iron-headed Cajus had not been content till he had forced Aunt Bella to consent to his being carried home. She had yielded, but only when the physician had declared it would probably tend to calm the patient if his wish were gratified. Cajus had been removed, an hour ago, in a cab, accompanied by the doctor and by Aunt Bella, who would not let him go alone. Peter Schmitz had been out the whole afternoon on business. Doctor Holm was delighted at last to see somebody who could help him in his work and to whom he could pour out his heart. He was very communicative to-day, but Munzer was more

reserved than usual, and Holm left him to himself, after making several fruitless efforts to engage him in conversation about business. But when at last all was done which could be done that day, when the last proof had been returned corrected into the printer's room, when the letters had been answered and the communications for next day's paper had been trimmed and prepared, Munzer once more drew out a sheet of paper and once more dipped his pen into the inkstand. That was too much for Doctor Holm. Knocking the ashes out of his pipe with unusual vehemence, he said :

"I say, Munzer, it is quite late, and I think you have done work enough for your few dollars."

"I do not work for money, dear Holm!" said Munzer.

"Ah! For what then? For humanity, wholesale? Dear Munzer, mankind as a whole will get along pretty well without our flaying ourselves alive, and then carrying our skin to market for sale."

"I know, Holm, no one is further from such suicidal ideas than yourself."

"Yes, by the Olympians, and I am proud of it. Man was not born to be free, says old Goeth-*orum*; and if that is true, at least in the sense in which the old gentleman took it, it is still more true that man was not born to be a pack-horse."

"You are becoming personal, dear Holm."

"*Tertium comparationis*, or in classic Latin, *tertiorum comparation-orum*. The third, you know, is that you take more upon yourself than you can bear, in spite of your capacity, which no one can appreciate more fully than I do. And suppose even—I assume it, for my part, only with large reservations—suppose there was any sense in sacrificing one's self for an idea, it seems to me we have no right to do so, till we have paid all our other debts first."

"I have no debts, dear Holm."

"I wish you had some, and some other human defects, which remind us that we are only men, after all, among other men. I am such a good republican that I hate every kind of aristocracy, even the aristocracy of virtue, and I do not wonder at all at the Athenians ostracizing Aristides. Why did he insist upon being better than Peter and Paul? But to return to your case——"

"Is your speech to be much longer?" asked Munzer, dipping his pen once more into the ink-stand.

"That depends on the time it will require to produce the desired effect on you," replied Holm. "To return to you, I said. You have, as you say, no debts, such as many an honest fellow has. But then, you have a charming wife and charming children, such as many an honest fellow has to do without. Now you owe it to this wife and these children, to keep fresh, and free, and cheerful for their sake; and how you will be able to do that if you keep on much longer working with your usual passionate zeal and excessive industry—by Zeus and all the Immortals, that is more than I can understand."

"Death is our common lot," said Munzer, becoming visibly more and more impatient.

"So Moira would have it," replied Holm, taking a cigar from his pocket, and lighting it. "That is not our fault, but it is our fault if we embitter the cup of life to ourselves and to others. Come, Munzer! The Schmitz family propose a walk. They evidently need it, both of them, for Peter hangs his head ominously, Aunt Bella looks like a thunder-cloud, and little Ottilia is half-stifled here, in these musty, old rooms, coming as she did fresh from a home where the woods are rich with the fragrance of pine-trees. Therefore, Munzer, oh come, and leave the abominable office! Fetch your wife, the adorable mother of lovely children! and those children themselves, for in such we are all to be changed, if we wish to be blest and to enter the kingdom of heaven!"

"I cannot do it, Holm! really I cannot!"

"Tell me the reason, oh man! and beware and be truthful!" answered Holm, who had already risen, stretching himself violently, and at last taking up his broad-brimmed, yellow straw-hat.

"I must look in upon poor Cajus to-night. You know he would despair of all mankind if I also were to abandon him, as he seems to think a little better of me than of the others."

"Let Cajus be seen by you as by others, oh Munzer! but that does not prevent us from joining the merrier party!"

"And before that," said Munzer, "I have to write, what you seem to have forgotten, the sixth and last epistle *In Præsidentem*. A week more, and the elections are here, and

I should like to have flayed this Marsyas before they come on."

Doctor Holm struck his forehead.

"*In President-orum!* Yes indeed. I had totally forgotten! He was here!"

"Who? The president?"

"Yes, and wanted you sorely. He has called on you at your house, or meant to call there—I do not remember which. He begs you will call on him, if possible, this evening."

"What does he want of me?" asked Munzer.

"The gods know. I do not. I did not ask him," said Holm. "We were interrupted by that affair of Cajus. Election business, I suppose. Perhaps he wants to offer a compromise. You ought not to go, in any case."

"Why not? The man calls on me; courtesy requires that I should return his call. Besides, I think it is the paper he wants. Thanks to our indolence, our adversaries are again strong enough to suppress us, if needs be, by force. I will tell the man that that will not help them much, and that the case is provided for. That is not exactly so; but he is cunning enough to believe it, and we shall thus be saved much trouble. And should I avoid a personal meeting with the man just now, when I aim my shafts daily at him, that would be cowardly, and the whole party would call it cowardice. I must go."

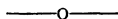
Munzer had risen and taken his hat. Holm shook his head.

"Munzer, I wish you would go with us, and leave the president alone. Do not put your trust in princes—or presidents either! He who runs into danger, perishes in good earnest. Munzer, I feel as if you would be sorry to have gone there. Don't do it!"

"Oh, these timid men!" said Munzer. "Lions in the path, right and left! If there were only dangers threatening, I should like to plunge right in. I want some excitement. I feel as if we were not advancing a step, as if the revolution had died in March, and we were decking a corpse with flowers, without knowing it. The meeting with my adversary will refresh me. I will tell him the sixth letter to his face; that will save me the trouble of writing it. That is *profit tout clair!*"

And Munzer hastily left the room, without waiting for his lame companion.

"I believe Munzer is going to lose his senses one of these days," said Doctor Holm, walking across the creaking gallery towards the front part of the old house with extraordinary care—for Cajus's accident had forcibly reminded him of the frailty of man, and all that belongs to man—"how can a man be so clever in general, and such a fool in particulars?"



CHAPTER V.

WHEN Doctor Holm entered the sitting-room, he found the whole Schmitz family assembled there. Peter was walking up and down, with his hands behind his back, as if he were measuring the length of the room from the old cuckoo clock on one side, to Washington's portrait on the other. Aunt Bella sat, as usual, in the bay-window, embroidering—this time though with black yarn around her neck—and opposite to her was Ottilia, who seemed to have helped her aunt, but who, at the moment when Holm entered, was leaning back in her chair, and resting her head, seemed to be lost in reflection. It required no very sharp eye to see that a dark cloud overhung the sky of the Schmitz family. The straight, deep lines between Peter's eye-brows were darker than ever. Ottilia had evidently been crying, and the deep blush on Aunt Bella's cheeks, and the warlike expression of her eyes, showed clearly that the good lady had just been delivering a lengthened discourse, which had been interrupted by Doctor Holm's arrival.

"Be ye greeted with joy and with joyous hearts, oh my friends all!" cried Doctor Holm, shaking hands with Peter, and going up to the ladies, in order to shake hands with Aunt Bella also, and to make his bow to Ottilia with his usual grandiose manner.

"Joy!" said Aunt Bella, and an angry glance flashed from her large, dark eyes, the heirloom of the Schmitz family. "Indeed, we have reason to be joyous!"

"That would give me delight, but it does not seem to be quite true," replied Holm, taking a chair near the bay-window, and putting his broad-brimmed straw-hat on his cane, between his knees.

"What do you think of poor Cajus?" asked Peter, never stopping in his walk between the cuckoo clock and Washington's portrait.

"That he is a hero!" replied Holm with emphasis, and with an energetic stamping of his stick.

"That he is a fool, you mean!" said Aunt Bella.

"Fool-*orum*?" inquired Holm, in astonishment.

"Was it not folly, then, to sit there an hour, correcting your learned nonsense, and his arm so badly broken that Doctor Brand had to cut off the sleeve of his coat, and says such a thing has never yet occurred to him in all his practice? Was it not folly not to stay here with us, where there is an abundance of room, and all that he needs? But no! He must, perforce, have himself carried back to his miserable lodgings, where neither sun nor moon are ever shining. Not a soul will he have near him but an old nurse, who is all the time taking pinches of tobacco! He won't take any money from Peter, but says grandly, he 'keeps always a few dollars in reserve for such a case.' I have no patience with such eccentricities!" said Aunt Bella, taking her spectacles from her nose, putting them in the case, and throwing the case into her work-basket.

"Have you seen Cajus, Schmitz-*orum*?" asked Holm, who never cared to contradict Aunt Bella when she was in her "fighting humor," as he called it.

"Yes," said Schmitz. "It is as Bella says; he won't see anybody except Munzer. Cajus is a fool."

"But, my dear friends, what will you have?" cried Holm, almost angry when he found he was to meet opposition even here. "We must take men as they are, and that is after all not so very difficult, as long as people do not ride their hobbies over their neighbors' toes. Caj-*orum* is a queer saint, you know. I have an instinctive antipathy against fanatics; but we ought not to condemn them all for the sake of a few. Who of us knows how Cajus has become what he is now?—how fate may have banged away at him, before it hammered him into such a crooked, rusty old nail? When he came

into the office the other day and asked for a place as proof-reader, I said to Munzer: 'Look here, Munzer, I do not like the man!' 'But I like him,' replied Munzer, 'for he is poor and unhappy.' That was a noble answer of Munzer's, and I have since only remembered his being poor and unhappy, and tried not to mind the rest, not to inquire if I like *Cajorum* or not!"

"But, dearest Holm," said Aunt Bella, interrupting the zealous advocate, "we do not say a word about liking or not liking, but we speak about acting foolishly or wisely. And I tell you once more, Cajus is a fool not to accept kindly the help that is offered him. You are all the time talking of republican principles and fraternity, and heaven knows what fine things, and when the case comes when you are to act in accordance with your words: Ah! the gentlemen have forgotten everything; they wrap themselves up in their old pride and their old selfishness, and act as if they were alone in the world. Speak as you think, and act as you speak, that is my principle, and I know no better!"

And Aunt Bella clapped her hand on her rolled-up embroidery.

"*Very-orum good-orum!*" said Holm.

"Come, Ottilia, we must get ready. It is high time. You are going with us, Holm, are you not?" said Aunt Bella, rising.

"Everywhere you lead me, oh sweetest and loveliest ladies!" sang Holm, rising also with the aid of his cane; "for I enjoy the delightful weather, and long in my heart's core after the fragrant blooming trees and the murmuring breezes; also after the fulness of foaming beer in the garden, which the immortals call '*Roman Hall*,' on the river!"

"We are not going to the Roman Hall this evening, Holm. Rupertus has invited Munzer and us, and bound us over to bring you too."

"Be it so!" answered Holm, gallantly opening the door for the ladies as they went into the adjoining room; "do I not know that house and the garden and excellent vintage?"

He closed the door, and assuming the sober tone in which he spoke of serious matters, he said to Peter:

"Tell me, *Schmitz-orum*, what is the matter here? The little one has been crying; Aunt Bella is in a fearful fighting

humor, and you look as black as a bad day in November ; what has happened ? ”

“ Oh nothing, nothing of importance,” said Peter Schmitz, pausing in his walk, passing his hand over his forehead and his eyes, and then beginning his wanderings once more.

“ Hm ! ” growled Doctor Holm ; “ as you choose. “ What do you think ? the president was at the office and wanted to see Munzer ! ”

“ Yes, oh yes ! ” replied Peter, not thinking of what he said. “ Bella told me so. I really have not thought of it again.”

Holm shook his head. Peter Schmitz must be very busy indeed to be so indifferent to a fact which ordinarily would have interested him deeply.

“ And what do you think ? Munzer has accepted the president’s invitation, and is this moment on his way to his house ? ”

“ Impossible ! ” said Peter Schmitz, turning abruptly on his heel with great vehemence.

“ As I tell you ! ”

“ Munzer puts himself into direct communication with our worst enemy,” continued Peter, passionately, coming close up to Holm ; “ with this president who is as smooth tongued and false as they all are, these Hohensteins, these d—— ”

He smote his head and said to himself, “ Be calm, Peter, be calm ! ” went to the window and drummed with his fingers on the panes.

Holm had never seen Peter Schmitz so angry in all the long years of their acquaintance. The conviction that something grievous must have happened to his friends, lay like a heavy load on the good man’s heart. But his courage did not fail him.

“ I say Schmitz-orum,” he remarked, “ whatever has happened—and it cannot have been a trifle, I see that—but even Patroclus died, and he was more than thou ! You have gone through so much that is bad in your life—throw this into the bargain ! You know Fate has not dealt very kindly with me, but I say with the preacher : All is vanity ; joy and grief, grief and joy, all but the fact that we must remain honest men, in spite of all these rascals and scoundrels. That is the main thing, the others amount to nothing. And

now let us go ; I hear Aunt Bella with her bunch of keys ; and one thing more, Schmitz : don't tell the ladies, and especially not Clara, where Munzer is. I do not look upon the matter as so important, to tell the truth, but it is better. Ah, there you are, fair ones, now up to the gentle Rupertus ! ”

Clara Munzer was ready when her friends called for her. She seemed, however, to be much saddened when she heard that her husband was again prevented from joining her—by election business, said Holm. “ Then we'll stay at home too, Charlie ! ” she said, taking off her hat. Charlie began to cry, and wanted to know why he had staid at home the whole afternoon finishing his tasks, if he was not to go to Mr. Rupertus now ? And why mamma had not sent him to bed an hour ago, like Ella, although he had not coughed once, and had brought home nothing but good marks ? Uncle Holm became the mediator, and he and his friends at last persuaded Clara to put on her hat again and to permit Charlie to go with them.

“ I am reluctant to do it,” said Clara ; “ I fear I shall contribute little to your entertainment.”

“ That is not expected,” said Holm ; “ for we shall take that upon ourselves, Aunt Bella and I.”

Holm took Aunt Bella's arm once more, while Peter went ahead with the two other ladies, and Charlie attached himself now to one and now to the other group. It was nearly dark already as they went through the narrow streets, which still suffered from the oppressive closeness of the day. Holm held his hat in his hand, and called again and again “ for the living breath of the river.”

“ But pray do stop now, Holm,” said Aunt Bella. “ That does not carry us there a minute sooner.”

“ Just as little as your melancholy faces remove the cause of your melancholy,” replied Holm, very seriously.

Aunt Bella knew this tone very well, and understood that her friend wanted to give her an opportunity of speaking out ; how much she felt the desire to do so, she proved at once by breaking out into tears and saying, amid sobs : “ Ah, Holm, we are very unhappy again ! ”

“ I see that,” replied Holm, “ and it pains me much, especially as you seem to look upon the matter as so important that even I cannot be trusted with the secret.”

"By no means, Holm," said Aunt Bella, eagerly. "I have only waited for a suitable moment to speak with you undisturbed."

"Well then, fire away, Aunt Bella," said Holm, impatiently. "*Charl-orum*, run a little ahead, my son, or I'll fall over your legs."

"The thing is this," said Aunt Bella, drying her tears; "poor Eugene died in very embarrassed circumstances, much worse off than Peter thought. The books were in a horrible state of confusion. Yesterday and to-day a large number of bills have been sent up by the lawyers to whom Peter had to leave the settlement of the estate, and Peter has no idea how he can possibly satisfy all these demands. And there is apparently no end to them—that is the worst. Now you can imagine Peter's situation. He is so proud of his honest name, and now he has only the alternative of ruining himself, or of letting it appear that his brother left this world a bankrupt."

"Hm! A sad choice!" growled Holm; "and the beautiful Ottilia cries her eyes out, eh?"

"Ottilia!" said Bella, eagerly. "What are you thinking of, Holm? Ottilia cries about something very different; just think—but more of that hereafter. She knows nothing of it. How can you imagine Peter would tell the child such horrible things! And that is the trouble. You know Peter: he must have somebody to love dearly. Thus he loved Margie, and loves her still; thus he loves his little one now, as he calls her, as if I had nothing to do with her, and as if she was not my child as well as his. But, to be sure, nobody troubles himself about me. I am used to it, and don't mind it. But that does not keep me from loving my relatives and from worrying myself day and night about what is to become of Peter. Rather than let Ottilia have the misery of reading in the newspapers that her father was a bankrupt—for in some way or other she is sure to find it out in time—rather than that, Peter will do anything—sell all and begin life once more, old as he is. And Holm, that concerns you, too; for I do not think Peter will be able to keep the paper, and he says it is more than doubtful whether he could get new shares subscribed to a republican paper, now that the people's zeal has cooled off so much. I told Peter

to make the paper a little less radical ; but that made him very angry, and he asked me why I did not advise him to sell out to the government at once and to betray his party ? I am sure I meant it very well, and I don't know anything of your political stuff."

And Aunt Bella resorted once more to her handkerchief.

"Hm, hm !" growled Holm. "That looks badly ! But, Aunt Bella, if Peter can only keep his head above water in other respects, the paper may go down for all I care. It will go pretty soon anyway. I'll be candid with you, Aunt Bella. You are an intelligent woman and you can listen quietly, can't you ? That about making it less radical, is simple nonsense, by your leave ; we can't go back, even if we chose ; and what is more, we don't desire to go back, if we could. Peter is right : he who abandons his post is a bad man ; but, mark me, Aunt Bella, the post on which we stand is abandoned. The others will not admit that ; but I have a cooler head, and I think I see pretty clearly how the land lies ; the revolution came too suddenly and found us all more or less unprepared. The nobility, the army, the government officials, have all recovered from their fright, and are arming very quietly ; the middle classes, like our friend Rupertus, whine for peace at any cost ; and the people proper are not men on whom we could safely rely. The excitement is subsiding, and ere long the reaction will come, and will succeed. I cannot explain to you all the reasons why I think so, but that is not necessary. I only want to show you why I expect the People's Journal to die pretty soon ; and if it has only influenced the elections in the province so as to be favorable to our party—and it has done so, I believe—why, then, I think it has had its reward and can die quietly."

"But, Holm," said Aunt Bella, "I thought Peter had built all his hopes upon the increasing value of the paper ? And what is to become of you and of Munzer ?"

"Hm," said Holm ; "as for Peter, he has begun life anew more than once, as you said just now. Such *tours de force* are becoming more difficult, it is true, with every year, but Peter is a man of uncommon energy, and can do more than others. I have unbounded confidence in his courage and his energy. I always feel as if one needed to care no more for his fate than for rain or sunshine. Munzer will leave us

in a few days for the great meeting, where the constitution is to be discussed. I believe we are sure of victory, unless quite unforeseen accidents should happen. Thus he has, for the time, a new sphere of action, more congenial to him than writing for the newspapers. Who knows, in fact, but a really great man may shine forth in our friend? Well, and as for me——”

Holm paused a moment, and his voice sounded a little husky, as he continued:

“The blow would fall hardest upon myself. I am no longer a youth, Aunt Bella; I have neither Peter’s indestructible energy, nor Munzer’s brilliant genius, but never mind! Our great Father on high, who clothes the lilies in the field and gives to all creatures their food upon earth—He will not forsake old Holm. I have few pretensions, few wants, and they are easily satisfied. For the future, then, Aunt Bella, we will let the future provide. But you have not told me all yet. Why did Ottilia cry? and why is Peter in such bad humor? You have something else on your mind. Confess it, Aunt Bella!”

“Well, if you must absolutely know it all, I presume I must tell you,” replied Aunt Bella, who desired nothing more than to pour out her whole heart into the bosom of her old, well-tried friend. “But you must not let Peter find out that you know, for I tell you he is strangely sensitive in all matters concerning Margie. Listen, Holm, and let us walk a little faster, or we’ll be left behind too far. I told you, I think, how very kind and sweet Margie was to me and the little one when we went there night before last. Well, yesterday, we went there again, and Margie kissed and caressed Ottilia till the tears ran down my cheeks, and then we left directly, because sister had to go up to nurse Wolfgang. But to-day I sent the little one again, because sister had urged me to do so; and when Ottilia gets there, she finds Margie bathed in tears, almost beside herself, so that Ottilia thinks Wolfgang is dead, and falls upon Margie’s neck—the dear, sweet girl!—and begins to sob and cry likewise. Well, at last the murder comes out: our dear brother-in-law does not wish Ottilia to come to the house, for that was the gist of the matter, although Margie, of course, tried to make the bitter pill as palatable as she could. Poor

Margie ! I really felt very sorry for her, but she is too weak. You may imagine, when Ottilia came home, her eyes quite red with crying, and I—stupid woman!—must needs tell Peter all about it, as if he had not trouble enough already, and as if I did not know that this scandalous conduct of our nice brother-in-law would offend him deeply ! I could box my ears when I think of it.”

“That would not be very useful to you or Peter,” said Holm ; “but let me make another suggestion. Let us make a league, defensive and offensive, against all melancholy ; otherwise our little company will be in the depths of misery and make us all wretched, and let us begin our alliance to-night. What do you say ?”

“Of course I will, dear Holm,” said Bella, zealously ; “you are perfectly right. I cannot stand this continual weeping and wailing any longer. And did you notice how sad Clara is to-night ? I tell you, Holm, those two will not end well. They do not suit each other, Holm. Clara is far too good for him. I have always said so, and I still say so. He always wants to do great things, and he does not know what is going on in his own house ; and he does not wish to know it. Great heavens ! here we are already. Well, how time flies !”

Mr. William Rupertus, a wealthy man, before whose charming villa the company had just arrived, overcome by dust and heat, was an old friend of the Schmitz family, but had only recently become acquainted with Munzer and Holm—in fact only since the establishment of the People’s Journal. Mr. William Rupertus was rich enough to indulge in very liberal political views, especially as the government had committed the unpardonable blunder of neglecting a man of such great merit. He had not been made a “councillor ;” he had not been decorated with the Order of the Falcon ; in fine he had not been made happy and conservative. Mr. William Rupertus carried this feeling of not having been sufficiently appreciated with him wherever he went, and loved to quote lines from a well-known monologue in Schiller’s *Wallenstein*, such as, “You have succeeded, Octavio !” or, “You have cut down the lovely boughs !” or, “Here I stand a leafless tree !” although it was very difficult if not impossible to discover the smallest connection between the

quotations and the position of the quoter. For if any one had no good reason to quarrel with fate, that man was Mr. Rupertus. In the full vigor of manhood, with exuberant health, the owner of a large fortune, partly inherited and partly increased by his own industry ; married to a lady not exactly beautiful, but clever and excellent in every way, and of whom he was justly proud ; father of a number of lovely, affectionate children, whom he loved tenderly—he was not satisfied ! Nay, he was so dissatisfied that when Peter Schmitz was about to establish the People's Journal, and appealed to him on the ground of former business relations for assistance, he took shares to a large amount, although no one could be more opposed to political radicalism than Mr. William Rupertus. "He is a kind of Herostatus," Munzer used to say, "and his shares of the People's Journal are the torches he throws into the temple of Diana."

Mr. Rupertus and his wife received their guests most kindly, and half an hour later the company was sitting around a table in the new garden-house which Mr. Rupertus had only built this spring, and of which he was not a little proud. The room was richly furnished, and yet in good taste. From the windows, and from the balcony before the windows, one looked up the wide stream to the city, where countless lights played merrily on the dark waters. The balcony overhung a narrow, sandy road, running along the bank of the river, and separated from the garden by a high wall. Through an iron gate one reached the road, beyond which lay a couple of elegant row-boats, which were rocking on the deep water in a small bay, surrounded by a copse of willows.

This new building, which had cost much money, and even more trouble and labor, was of course duly admired by the guests, and especially by Doctor Holm and Aunt Bella, who were quite enthusiastic in their praise. Doctor Holm, in a pathetic speech, compared Mr. Rupertus to the king in the ballad, who, standing on the top of his palace, looked upon Samos at his feet, and advised him, William Rupertus, to throw, as that king did, some precious jewel into the passing stream—perhaps that bottle of hock which he was just about to open—and thus conciliate the jealous gods.

"You can afford to make fun of us," said Rupertus, drawing the cork, and pouring the dark-red wine into new glasses.

"You are a man who has a name ; every child in the street, I dare say, knows you ; no artist comes to our good city who does not call on you at once, to enlist your good-will and recommendation. You are a power—yes, and if you chose you might have yourself elected and sent to Frankfurth, like our friend Munzer. I have heard many people say that would be the man for us, but he won't ! But I !—what could I accomplish ? I am "a leafless tree," an obscure citizen—a stupid grocer, as you say when you are among yourselves. No, doctor, for all that, I would not pour my good hock into the Rhine !"

Doctor Holm raised his eyes and hands to the blue ceiling, adorned with golden stars, and said :

"Rash man, with violent speech, to defy the Immortals ! Hear him not, oh ye heavenly powers, the heretic mortal !"

But Rupertus was not so easily led aside.

"Ah, come doctor," he said ; "you know I am right. Every man must have something to keep him up. You clever and learned men rely on your erudition and your fame ; we unlearned people have nothing but ourselves, as Walenstein says ; or our little money, as you say, and what we can get for our little money. Well then, you ought not to blame us so much if we attach some importance to our house and garden and fields, and so forth, and like to have it all as handsome and as perfect as we can make it. And that is not so easy ; now here is something wanting, and now there ; we are never at rest and at ease. You have been kind enough to praise my garden. The situation is beautiful, I grant you, but it is evidently much too small for a handsome domain such as I want to have. Then I have no fine old trees on my place, while there is quite a number on the adjoining property of the Baroness Hohenstein. If I could add her garden to mine, then I might be proud ! Great heavens, what efforts I have made ! I have offered the baroness's agents, indirectly, twice and thrice as much as the place is worth, but she will not hear of it. To be sure, the garden is so quiet and retired—I dare say it is worth all the world to my indiscreet neighbor."

"Oh, William, that is unkind !" said Mrs. Rupertus.

"Well, well !" replied her husband, "I do not mean to say anything bad about the baroness ; I only repeat what

the world says. I hardly know her by sight, and a prodigiously pretty woman she is. *Apropos*, Mrs. Munzer, how does your husband like the baroness? He is a connoisseur!"

"My husband?" asked Clara, who started when Rupertus spoke to her as if roused from a dream. "I do not think Bernhard ever saw the lady."

Rupertus laughed. "Well, you are certainly discreet. I presume I must not say anything more about it."

"About whom, and about what?" asked Clara, seriously.

"Don't talk such foolish things," said Mrs. Rupertus.

"Well, do tell the truth, or the poor little woman will think there is a great secret behind," said Aunt Bella, angrily.

"But why on earth will you not let me speak out?" cried Mr. Rupertus. "I do not intend to injure the doctor's honor and reputation, I assure you. Is it my fault if he interfered the other night when the mob was making a riot before the house of the baroness in town? My scamp of a gardener was one of them, and told me all about it. He gave them a beautiful speech from the balcony of the baroness's house! Would not we all have done the same, except of course the beautiful speech, which I at least could never have made? Come, ladies and gentlemen, let us drink the health of our absent friend, Doctor Munzer!"

"And then I beg you will drink the health of our new young friend here, and may she soon find a second home among us," said good Mrs. Rupertus, embracing and kissing Ottilia, who sat by her.

The glasses met, and the cloud which Mr. Rupertus had unconsciously raised on the clear sky seemed to have disappeared. Aunt Bella and Holm took care to furnish topics for pleasant, cheerful conversation. Holm confessed to Bella the love which he had felt for her in his silent heart now for twenty-five years, and that there was but one single circumstance which always had prevented him, and still did prevent him, from making an offer. He had, he said, in spite of his republican views, a secret leaning towards the nobility, and had vowed as a young man to marry no one but a lady of noble birth. He admitted that there was some doubt about the mutilated but undoubtedly noble escutcheon over the front door of the house in River street; it might belong

to the Schmitz family, but it might also belong to some one else ; and as long as that point was uncertain, he must deny himself a happiness of which—to tell the truth—he felt in his repentant heart altogether unworthy.

Aunt Bella gave the good-natured teaser as good as she received.

“I can tell you, dear Holm,” she replied, “if you were to make me your wife, that would not be the most foolish thing yet you ever did in your life. I am not as beautiful as the Italian countess of whom you have told us in many a weak hour, nor quite as young perhaps ; but, Holm, since you were in Rome twenty-five years ago, you have not grown younger nor handsomer, believe me !”

“I invoke the great gods to bear witness to such sacrilege !” cried Holm. “Not younger ? I grant that. But not handsomer ? Aunt Bella, I tell you I am handsomer now than I have ever been before.”

“Maybe !” replied Aunt Bella. “But, dear Holm, after all, you will soon be a regular old bachelor, and I advise you to look out before it is too late ! I am not going to wait for you forever, for sooner or later I must choose among all my admirers, or else I also shall be beyond my first bloom.”

“Sweetest of beings !” cried Holm ; “here is my heart and my hand !”

“And if I were to take you at your word !” cried Bella, with a sharp glance from her dark Schmitz eyes.

“Ye gods !” exclaimed Doctor Holm, quickly drawing back his hand and making such a face of consternation that Mr. and Mrs. Rupertus, Peter Schmitz, and even Ottilia had to laugh.

The ringing of a passing steamer’s bell was heard through the open windows of the garden-room. “Now mind, my friends, how the waves will come rushing up the bank,” said Mr. Rupertus. “Do you hear ? Is not that famous ?”

At that moment a boy’s anxious cry was heard from the place where the boats were fastened to the bank of the river.

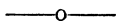
“Great God ! where are my children ?” cried Clara Munzer, starting up.

Charlie and William had long since risen from table ; no

one had noticed them when they had left the room, about half an hour ago.

And once more the fatal cry arose: "Help! help!" amid the rushing of the swell caused by the steamer as the waves broke against the river-side.

Mrs. Rupertus was paralyzed by terror. Deadly pale, trembling in all her limbs, she tottered from her chair, only to fall fainting into the arms of Aunt Bella and Ottilia. But Clara rushed to the door and down the steps, Mr. Rupertus and Peter Schmitz by her side, while Doctor Holm followed as rapidly as his lameness would permit.



CHAPTER VI.

WHEN the president reached home, he found a letter from his uncle at Rheinfeld, which relieved him of his last doubts as to his conduct in the proposed union between the two families. The old gentleman told him in dry words that he wished Wolfgang to marry Camilla, and that the two parties concerned should find it to their advantage to comply with his wishes. The president at once took the letter to his wife and had a long conference with her, very different from similar conversations of the kind in this, that for once the two were perfectly *d'accord*, as his wife remarked with a pleased smile. The latter went, thereupon, down to her daughters' dressing-room, in order to give the young ladies instructions as to their conduct to-night, while the president went back to his room in order to have an interview with his new valet Jean. It was almost a confidential conference, and the names of the Baroness Hohenstein and Doctor Munzer were frequently mentioned. The interview lasted till the ordinary servant—with a very savage side-glance at the interloper—brought in the lighted lamp, and at the same time announced that Doctor Munzer was waiting in the ante-room, and begged to know if the president could receive him now?"

"One moment till I ring," the president replied; and

when the servant had gone out, turning to Jean: "You understand! a hundred dollars; and if you give satisfaction, and after a year, a suitable place in my office; if not, you know I am aware of all your antecedents, and know how to disarm people who are in my way!"

"You shall be satisfied, Mr. President!" said Jean, placing his hand on the place where his heart might be. "You shall see——"

"All right!" whispered the president; "no phrases, if you please! You can go now; there, through that room. Doctor Munzer must not see you just now."

Jean disappeared discreetly through the door which led into his new master's chamber, and from thence out into the great hall.

The president pressed the little silver bell on his writing-table.

The servant opened the door and announced,

"Doctor Munzer!"

"Ah! That is very kind of you!" said the president, offering his visitor his small, white hand; and as Munzer, after a formal bow, did not seem inclined to take it, inviting his guest with a graceful gesture to take a seat in one of the arm-chairs.

"No kindness, Mr. President," replied Munzer, sitting down opposite the president; "nothing but simple courtesy, which I could not neglect without risking misunderstanding on one or the other side."

The president was rather taken by surprise by this reply, the diplomatic reserve of which he could fully appreciate. He had heretofore seen the famous republican only at a distance, and expected a very different manner from him. It seemed to him quite an enigma to find so much social *aplomb* in a man whom he knew only as the author of poems full of an enthusiasm which appeared to him ridiculous, and as the agitator whose violent speeches he had criticized as bombastic and high-flown. He looked at his strange guest with wonder, and even betrayed some of this feeling in his features.

Munzer also fixed his intelligent eyes upon the president.

A comparison between the two men, as they sat there with the full light of the lamp streaming upon their faces and

figures, would no doubt have been of great interest to the physiognomist. They seemed hardly to belong to the same people, nor even to the same age. Here, a smoothness of manner so finely polished that the breath of passion had apparently never dimmed it, and certainly could dim it no more; there, a fierce strength, which threatened every moment to break through the self-imposed calmness; here, watchful cunning, carefully observing every movement of the adversary, and conscious that its strength lies solely in precaution and the most subtle calculation of the chances of the game; there, proud courage, loving conflict for the sake of conflict, and despising or ignoring danger. The tall, pliant man with the high, narrow forehead, the smooth-shaven, smiling face, the low, soft voice, and the almost feminine grace with which he used his white, well-kept hands, could apparently be at home nowhere except behind the green table of the board over which he presided, or near the fire-place in a brilliant salon, tea-cup in hand, and entertaining in pleasant chat a number of great men and ladies in full dress. The other man, with the proud head and the noble, pale countenance, in which the fine dark-blue eyes flashed out great and bold in spite of their melancholy expression, with the powerful frame, the broad shoulders and the finely-developed chest, out of which the deep, melodious voice rose as out of the heart itself—he could evidently be fully himself only on great occasions, at the head of enthusiastic crowds, rushing irresistibly upon a hostile battery.

“Very well,” said the president; “very well. But you must admit, doctor, when we are kind, without meaning to be so, that it is twofold kindness.”

“That may be, Mr. President; but pardon me, I hardly think you have desired an interview with the editor of the *People’s Journal* merely in order to discuss with him the meaning of kindness. May we not at once proceed to business? I presume it concerns our paper, which naturally must have been of late quite a thorn in the side of government and in your own.”

“My own? Why particularly mine, my very dear sir?” replied the president in his softest tones. “Perhaps because the *People’s Journal* has done me the honor to subject my administration to long, and I may say diligent, criticism?

As for that, such pleasant things are unavoidable in a high position, especially in a free state."

"Ah indeed!" replied Munzer, with irony, which he did not care to conceal. "I must confess that the slight effect which the articles *In Præsidentem* seem to have had upon President Hohenstein is not very flattering to the author. It will, therefore, be less embarrassing to you, Mr. President, if I present myself as the mortified author of these unprofitable literary efforts."

"You tell me nothing new there," answered the president, with his most courteous smile. "I could never do Doctor Munzer's simple, effective style the injustice to confound it with the ordinary journalistic writing of second-rate men."

"Pardon me, Mr. President, if I once more express a desire to pass over the introduction as quickly as possible and to proceed to business."

"We are in the midst of it, my dear sir," said the president, and at the same time he slightly moved the lamp so that the shadow fell upon his own face; "for the very fact that you, a man of such decided talent and such erudition, place yourself on a footing of equality with ordinary newspaper scribblers, and the sincere regret which this fact has caused me and persons of higher position—this is my reason for suggesting to you a personal interview, which I desired even before you had become the editor of the People's Journal."

Munzer moved impatiently in his chair.

"I am sorry to say I have not the remotest idea of what you are driving at," he said curtly.

"I trust we shall soon understand each other," said the president, still in the same low, kindly tone. "It would be a marvel if we should have done so at once. For that is the curse of our day, that Babylonian confusion has seized upon men, and no one any longer understands the language of others, although in the end all wish to gain the same thing, though in different ways and by different means."

"Perhaps the difficulty is more serious than that," said Munzer, who began, almost unconsciously, to be interested in the conversation. "Might not the difference in language be the necessary effect of a corresponding difference in ideas?"

The president shrugged his shoulders.

"I do not know," he said ; "but when I read the violent discussions which are now carried on in the press, in popular assemblies, in clubs and so forth, I am often reminded of what Goethe once said about some philosopher or other, whose abstruse jargon at first made it almost impossible to comprehend his ideas: 'One has to get accustomed to his language,' said the old gentleman, 'but when we know that with him a horse is not a horse, but a *cavallo*, and God not God, but perhaps *Dio*, then we can read his works easily enough.' I believe it is very much so with us. You want Germany to be united ; you want a great, free Germany. I want the same. But you want it, if possible, to-day ; and I—I do not wish to build a fabric that has no sub-structure, and cannot see that we will ever succeed by acting so precipitately."

Munzer's lips curled up with a contemptuous smile.

"In order that the tortoise may ever keep ahead of quick-footed Achilles? No, Mr. President, two thousand years ago it was called folly to fill new wine in old bottles ; and yet, that is what the best of your party desire to do. I mean those who really desire that Germany should be free, powerful, and united. But the others? They have no wish but to preserve all the old superstitions, to protect their privileges, which make the idea of equality and fraternity among men a hollow phrase—in fine, to fill the old, tasteless wine into an elegant new bottle, to which they give the prettiest name in the world, in order to deceive the credulous multitude as to its contents. We, however, we are determined to be no longer content with honeyed words and fine phrases ; we want to have our share of the great inheritance . . . No, let me finish, Mr. President ; as I have said so much, I wish to say also what I still have to say with regard to you personally. I have attacked you in my paper, violently, pitilessly, not because I feel personal animosity against you—you may believe me on my word—nor because I undervalue your talents and your ability, for I consider you, on the contrary, a most distinguished officer of our government, but simply because I wished to show, in you, that miracles are no longer the order of the day, that the Saulus of yesterday can no longer become the St. Paul of to-day ; that

a government, unable to lay aside the men who were bred in absolute, arbitrary power, cannot carry out a revolution such as we need now, if the fructifying stream is not to lose itself in the arid sands of the old sterile despotism."

While Munzer, carried away by a torrent of thoughts which he had for years cherished in his soul, spoke thus with passionate vehemence, scarcely able to control himself, the reception-rooms of the lady of the house had been gradually filled with the mixed noises peculiar to a large company, in which the low confused murmuring of many voices and the clinking of glasses and cups predominated. When Munzer rose from his chair, and, as he was prone to do in moments of deep excitement, began to walk up and down in the room, he happened to approach the door leading to the salon, and then he thought he heard a voice which suddenly drove the blood to his heart. The president also had heard the voice; the deep shadow which fell on his face hid the scornful smile which was then playing around his lips and the quick watchful glance which his cold, cunning eyes cast at Munzer.

Munzer turned once more to the president, who had not stirred in his chair, and who now said, pointing to the chair on which Munzer had been sitting:

"You must sit down once more, my very dear sir, if it were only to hear your adversary calmly. First of all, I thank you for the candor with which you have spoken of our own mutual relations. Although I never doubted for a moment that your attacks upon me proceeded from the purest motives, I am still glad to hear it confirmed by your own lips. Then permit me to suggest that you wrong us when you say the government and its officers have not the same good intentions that you have. I will not remind you that the assumption is apparently quite gratuitous—that our august sovereign has assured the officers of his *corps d'élite* only the other day that he has done everything spontaneously—I will grant, for argument's sake, that it is as you say. But now I ask you upon your conscience: are you able to replace the old worn-out wheels of the government machine by new and better-made ones? Could you find in your party suitable men to fill all the offices you wish to vacate? You cannot do it; and if I happened to be one of your intimate friends and associates, instead of being President Hohenstein, you

would confess that you cannot do it. What follows? That having no clean water, you will have to wash the soiled linen of the government for some time yet in dirty suds. But who prevents you from adding gradually more and more fresh water? And this is the main point of my question: Who hinders you from speaking frankly, from joining the government, and from using the machinery already on hand for your ends and purposes? Do you think we would hesitate to receive you? That is not so, I can assure you! The government is fully aware of its needs and its defects, and is quite ready to avail itself of new and efficient agents. We may not seem to you to notice everything; but we see more than you imagine. We know the Hotspurs of your party, hollow men as they are; but we know also the stronger minds, those minds which alone give a weight and a value to the zeros you drag behind you. It is not my purpose, Doctor Munzer, to flatter you, and to wish to make you betray your convictions for the sake of an office or a decoration. I should be ashamed to make you an offer which I know you would reject with contempt; but I can and must say this: if you should be willing to employ your strength, your talents, and your extended information in the service of the government, any place which you should claim as fit for your abilities would be open to you."

Munzer had heard but a small portion of the last part of the president's speech, for in the adjoining room some one had been playing on a piano a few detached bars of an air which Munzer had heard but once, but which he would never again forget—an air which had simply charmed his soul.

He rose by a powerful effort over himself.

"I thank you, I thank you very much for your good opinion, Mr. President," he said, mechanically; "but it does not seem to me that that brings us nearer to an understanding. Besides, I hear you have company, and fear to detain you from more pleasing conversation. Permit me to take my leave!"

"Oh, certainly not!" said the president; "this clinking and cackling in the adjoining room is unpleasant enough, but do not let that drive you away; we have so rarely an opportunity of saying a sensible word to a sensible man."

Before Munzer could make a reply, the huge folding-doors opened wide, so that a flood of light, from chandeliers and lamps and wax-candles on consoles and tables, together with the louder noise of a large assembly, poured into the room where they were ; and when Munzer, almost frightened, turned round, he saw two ladies enter, arm in arm. One was an elderly, very stately, and somewhat corpulent lady ; the other—whom Munzer knew but too well—the beautiful siren whose image had just risen before his soul, and from whom he had just been about to flee !

“My dear doctor !” said the grand lady, letting Antonia’s arm go, and rustling up to Munzer. “Pardon the intrusive curiosity of one of your greatest admirers, who could not bear the idea that the author of *Rosamond* was here in her husband’s room, without venturing upon an effort to make his acquaintance.”

Munzer bowed silently, and when he raised his head again his eye fell upon Antonia, whose large dark eyes were fixed upon him with a peculiar and almost anxious expression.

“My daughters, like myself, have so long desired,” said the lady of the house, “to see you ! You must permit me, doctor, to present my children.”

“Pardon me, madam,” said Munzer. “You see I am by no means prepared to appear in your salons.”

“Oh, doctor, no ceremony !” cried the great lady. “We are quite a family party. You know dear Antonia ? Is it not so, dear Philip ?”

And she turned to her husband.

Antonia stepped up to Munzer, and said in a quick, low tone :

“Stay, I must speak to you !” and then aloud : “Do us the favor, doctor ! You know, *noblesse obligé* ! Why did you write *Rosamond* ? You must take the consequences now !”

“I should see in your remaining a proof of what you told me in regard to our personal relations,” said the president.

“Give me your arm, doctor, and let me show you my girls,” said his wife, touching Munzer with her fan, and leading him away, while the president said to Antonia, “Pray sister, one moment !” and kept her in the room.

Munzer had not been often in his life in so brilliant a

salon as that in which he found himself now almost by force. But in vain did the many eyes that examined him, as he entered, with staring wonder or impertinent curiosity, look for a trace of embarrassment in his fine pale face. Sharper eyes saw in his features, and in the carriage of his tall, powerful frame, more pride than humility, and fancied even they discovered in the flash of his large, brilliant eyes, a spark of rising indignation that might easily be fanned into a bright blaze. And Munzer really did feel so, while the president's wife, holding on to his arm, presented him here and there to ladies and gentlemen: "General Hinkel-Gackel—a great admirer of your muse, doctor—Chief Burgomaster Dasch—ah! I see the gentlemen know each other!—Baron Drozte, Councillor of the Supreme Court—Assistant-Judge Wyse—Baron Willamowski—Baron Brinkman—but what have you done with the young ladies, gentlemen? All fluttered away like little doves, of course to listen to a funny story from Kettenberg! Why, just hear how they are laughing! That man Kettenberg—the painter, you know—have you seen his last picture at the exhibition? He is our *enfant terrible*, as my Aurelia calls him. Nothing but fun and foolishness in his head, but such a nice man! There are the young people, all in a crowd! We shall have to go in there to see them. To be sure, here they are! Camilla! That is my Camilla, doctor! Aurelia, how warm you look again! The two Misses Hinkel—Miss Drozte—why did not your mother come to-night, dear Elfrede?—and there he is, the master of the revels!—Kettenberg, you shall pay for it! To turn all the girls' heads!"

"Madam!" said Kettenberg, a strikingly handsome young man, with dark curly hair, black beard and black moustache; "I think, on the contrary, I do them a great service. The little heads may possibly come into the right places thus."

"Oh, you scamp! How can you let him say such things of you young ladies? But you must excuse me for a moment, doctor; there are some new arrivals, I see."

And the great lady went away to receive "her dear, dear brother," Alderman Hohenstein, who had just entered the reception-rooms.

The president's party was to-night to have one surprise

after the other. The alderman's arrival excited hardly less astonishment than that of Munzer. Those who were initiated in party politics, like the commanding general, the burgomaster, and a few others, knew of course that Alderman Baron Hohenstein had, during the last few days, come forth from his chrysalis of a radical as an ardent defender of the throne and the altar; but even they had not been aware that the reconciliation of the repentant sinner with his family had been so complete as it was proved by his presence in the salons of the president, and his exceedingly cordial reception by the lady of the house. The neophyte had stood his trials; he was henceforth a peer among his peers. The company took pains to let him see this. All the gentlemen present, Count Hinkel at their head, vied with each other in shaking hands with him, in telling him something agreeable; and the servant would never have succeeded in his manœuvres to reach him with some refreshments, of which he evidently stood much in need, if Camilla had not come herself from the adjoining room to bring "uncle" a cup of tea with her own fair hands.

"Dear uncle, you must for once let me wait upon you!" she said, with a sweet, bashful smile, and then raised her long, dark eyelashes to look at the councillor with an expression for which Baron Willamowski, who stood near by, would have unhesitatingly given his soul's salvation.

There was no lack of subjects for conversation and observation to-night. For hardly had the surprise caused by the alderman's appearance subsided a little, when Colonel Hohenstein and his wife, and with them Lieutenant Cuno and Ensign Odo entered the room. The latter two were, it was well known, standing personages at the president's parties, but the parents had never appeared except on peculiarly solemn occasions, when special invitations were sent out, and it was a secret well known to the whole town that the two sister-in-laws lived in deadly enmity with each other. This event, therefore, must also have its special significance; and it was but natural that all the watchers and gossips, of whom there were exactly as many present as the company counted in numbers, should at once set to work to find the key to all these mysteries. And really it did not take long before a piece of news of truly amazing interest

passed from ear to ear through the whole assembly—no one knew where it had originated—the news of the impending betrothal of Camilla with her cousin Wolfgang, the alderman's son. The presence of all the members of the family gave some color to the report, and explained also why Antonia had now been locked up with the president in his private room for more than half an hour, no doubt on important family matters. Antonia, proud and obstinate as she was known to be, was probably opposed to such a *mésalliance*—as Wolfgang's mother was nobody but plain Miss Schmitz—and yet it was probably deemed desirable in a matter of such very great importance that the unanimous consent of all who bore the name of Hohenstein should be obtained. This furnished, moreover, some explanation at least for Doctor Munzer's presence, which was otherwise utterly enigmatical. Doctor Munzer was—no one knew again who had furnished this piece of intelligence—an intimate friend of the Schmitz family, and had, besides, been Wolfgang's teacher for many years. They evidently wished thus to show some attention to young Hohenstein by honoring his teacher, and had given the matter a slight political coloring in order to make it less surprising—no doubt a nicely calculated measure.

While the crowd found ample entertainment in this manner, and the servants hurried about with tea and cakes and refreshments of every kind, Munzer had had abundant time to reflect on the false position in which he found himself here. As soon as the president's wife had left him, he had become conscious of the necessity of promptly leaving a house which he ought never to have entered. He felt that to stay longer would be to betray his whole past life, and he determined to leave as soon as he should have had an opportunity of telling Antonia that it was not worth while to begin again the game of the other evening. But he must remain till then. The proud woman was not to imagine that he fled from her, or that she might make a foot-ball of him according to her sovereign pleasure. She also might feel a little of that heart-ache which had been his inheritance from childhood up—an inheritance which the last days had largely increased—if she had a heart!

And Munzer remained, hoping every moment to see An-

tonia return to the company ; and every moment he spent in these rooms filled him more and more with a strange feeling, of which he could give himself no good account, and which yet kept him at the president's house not less than the desire of seeing Antonia.

If he had had a woman's chaste sensibility, he would have known what this feeling was. Munzer was an accomplished connoisseur, and his eye delighted in wandering over the beautiful pictures, vases, and statues all around him on pedestals and consoles ; he was a poet, and the presence of so many elegant, charming women affected him like the sweetest music. After having sauntered about through the lofty, brilliantly-lighted rooms, enjoying all he saw, he entered a small cozy boudoir, lighted up by a chaste alabaster lamp that hung from the ceiling ; he sank into the swelling velvet cushions of a circular sofa, in the centre of which a column bore a miniature fountain merrily playing in a marble basin. And as he lay there, he thought of the wretched hut where, shivering and hungering, he had grown up a lean, gloomy boy, and the fearful winter night when his father lay white and cold and stiff on his straw-bed, and his sick, sorrowful mother knelt by the corpse, murmuring wild, incoherent words, which she fancied to be prayers, letting her rosary glide through her hard, trembling hands. He thought how his young heart filled with unspeakable horror and wretchedness, how he rushed from the hut out into the raging night, to run down to the village for the priest. He thought of the kind old priest, full of benevolence, who took the orphan the very next day to his poor little home . . .

"Well, doctor, what is the poem you are writing in your mind," said Kettenberg, the painter, with whom Munzer had on his first entrance exchanged a few civil words, and who now sat down by him on the sofa. "If by chance you should want a good subject, I can perhaps supply you with a few attractive sketches. There is, for instance, little Camilla—you can make good use of her as a siren, *alias* fisher of men. I used to be enthusiastic about her, as everybody is who sees her for the first time ; and she accepts enthusiasm, I can tell you ; but for a permanency I prefer her sister Aurelia—clear summer weather, I assure you, with the necessary showers to furnish delightful variety. She is not quite as

beautiful as the siren Camilla, but I think she would run away even this very night with a man whom she really loved—and I like such characters. Or, how do you like Miss Georgianna Hinkel, the young lady there with the magnificent red hair, which she curls like an antique Apollo, and her equally classic bare shoulders and bosom? She is rather—a Phryne or a Laïs; she sent me a discreet proposition to paint her as Diana Anadyomene, and for whom do you think—for her betrothed! She did not say whether I was to paint him as Actæon, nor whether she was to be modelled from nature. You look incredulous! I give you my word of honor it is so! Oh, I could tell you better things than that about this most honorable company!—things of which you book-worms never dream! I tell you: here and there pure and unadulterated Sodom and Gomorrah!”

“And why do you frequent a society for which you seem to have so little respect?” asked Munzer.

“Respect?” said Kettenberg; “hm! I do not deny them my respect exactly, for I think if other virtuous people could lead such a life, they would soon be not very different themselves. A plant which is too well fed, sends out superabundant shoots; and if it is not sufficiently nourished, it fades and withers away. Where there are lights, there must be shadows also. A man who knows southern countries as I do, learns soon how inevitably that is the case. But unfortunately I like the south and the light and the diabolical splendor of an exuberant Nature. It is in my blood; I cannot help it. And then, what will you have? I am a painter; a tolerably good painter according to your own criticism on the last Art Exhibition. *Eh bien!* I am not so endowed as to be able to paint directly for immortality. For whom else can I paint then? For the gods of the earth, the rich, the great!—who else wants to be painted? who else can pay me? Now, if I were to hold this society in horror, which is to me what light is to color, and were to cherish moral scruples—why, I might throw my palette into the fire and go and become a house-painter. Must I necessarily be a bad man on that account? I never yet harmed a man knowingly, and do not feel inclined to do so. I also love liberty, although you may not think so; but Art is a noble love, who has been true to me all my life long, and whom I don’t mean to for-

sake for any woman, however virtuous she may be. But I cannot imagine, by heaven, how Art can exist by the side of liberty—I mean your liberty. You want to abolish wealth, and Art is a luxury for the wealthy. The common people—in the best sense of the word, doctor—have no fondness for Art, no appreciation of Art. As long as Art has been known, it has found an asylum at the courts of princes. You need not suggest the republics of antiquity and of the Middle Ages ! It matters very little in the end whether one rules or a few share the rule between them. Pericles plundered the whole Archipelago to enrich the Acropolis, and—but I weary you by my talk, and I have not yet discharged my commission.”

“Your commission for me ? From whom ?”

“For you, of course ! and from whom ? Ah, that is hard to tell ; from the whole company. You know, not directly, but thus : ‘Just try to find out, Kettenberg ! You understand best how, Kettenberg !’ The fact is, I am to sound you on the subject of our common friend Wolfgang. I have made his acquaintance recently at Bonn and have become very fond of him—a fine fellow, upon honor !—is he really going to marry little Camilla ?”

“But I never heard a word of it !”

“Really ?”

“In good earnest !”

“And do you believe it ?”

“I should be very much pained to have to believe it. But the thing seems to me almost impossible. Wolfgang is a serious, high-toned man ; he is not likely to be dazzled by a pretty face.”

“Do you think so, doctor ? I, for my part, think that misfortune has happened ere this to many a serious, high-toned man ; in fact, if my experience does not deceive me, it happens to such men most frequently. But in this case, the diplomacy of the old people may have had as much to say as the love of the young people. I am sure the thing is not an invention. You must know, little Aurelia is a great friend of mine, and deposits all her most tender secrets in the carefully guarded shrine of my heart. Aurelia assured me solemnly, a little while ago, that the thing was so. Other facts also seem to confirm the report. My friend Willamowski, who had the best prospect of ruining himself completely

as Camilla's husband, has been dismissed this morning in disgrace, and has since tried to drown his grief in various bowls of punch, which make his eyes look a little more glassy and stupid than usual. Cousin Cuno also, another admirer of the 'much wooed Helen,' has been of late in a fearful state of mind, although he had an exorbitant run of luck at faro, and talks of nothing but parvenus who have more luck than sense and who rob honest people of their deserts. And then it is certainly not a mere accident that to-night all the Hohensteins are assembled here, I believe for the first time in twenty years. The alderman—I tell you, they overwhelm him with courtesy, and Camilla flutters around him like a butterfly around the sweetest of flowers."

"Stop!" cried Munzer. "That is enough and more than enough! You certainly are at home in the house! Can I slip out through this door?"

Munzer had started up; Kettenberg also raised himself from his half-lying position.

"What a fire-brand you are!" he said. "But that is all right; your face says so! Through this door? Certainly! It opens upon a long passage, and the passage leads to the grand staircase. I have a great mind to run away with you, but I cannot offend little Aurelia so grievously. You have your hat, have you? Well then, *addio*, doctor! Give vent to your wrath in a few beautiful stanzas—that relieves the heart! Your muse has been silent long enough! *Addio!* Always keep to the left!"

Munzer shook hands with the painter, and went through the door into the passage, down which he kept till he came to the brilliantly-lighted hall. As he crossed it in order to reach the staircase, a servant, not in livery, met him with a waiter in his hand. Munzer thought he knew that yellow, smiling face, but he could not recollect where he had seen it. The man with the yellow face stopped after Munzer had passed him, made a malicious face, and said:

"There he runs away, the proud fool! What a stupid! Does not look to the right or the left! There is food for the baroness! But I'll pay you both; just wait!"

As Munzer went down the broad staircase, covered with a superb carpet, he heard behind him the rustling of a lady's dress. He paid no attention. But the rustling came nearer;

and when he reached the front door, which a porter, all gold-lace, opened promptly, he heard the step so close behind him that he stepped aside to let the lady pass. The lady, whose face was closely veiled, made a slight bow, and hastened by him.

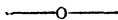
Before the front-door an elegant close-carriage was waiting. The coachman evidently had great trouble in keeping quiet the fiery young horses, which had probably been made impatient by long waiting. At the moment when the lady was going to put her foot on the step, which the servant had let down, the off-horse reared, the servant jumped aside, and the lady was evidently in imminent danger of being thrown under the wheels. Munzer hastened up and seized her. She slipped from his arms, fell to the ground, and then, seizing his hands, she said quickly :

"It is I—Antonia! You wished to avoid me, but you see chance is stronger than we are. Come with me; I have something important to tell you. Will you come?"

At the first sound of Antonia's voice, Munzer had been seized with a tremor of delight, and the next moment his proud blood had rushed from his heart to his head, and with a dark frown on his brow, he hissed rather than said, through his angrily compressed teeth :

"I will! It is better so, for you and myself!"

He helped Antonia into the carriage, stepped in and drew to the door. The servant was on the box by the coachman. The latter, now quite sure of himself, whipped the horses fiercely; the fiery animals gave a tremendous plunge, and the carriage thundered down the long street.



CHAPTER VII.

THE carriage thundered down the streets, one after another, and neither Antonia nor Munzer had yet said a word. Munzer's heart was full of indignation, but he could not prevent it from being gradually soothed and softened by the close contact with the beautiful woman,

whose presence filled the small space, as it were, with the fragrance of roses and violets. She had shrunk back into the furthest corner of the carriage, and he glanced at her only once, when he saw by the bright light streaming upon her from a brilliantly-lighted shop, that her fair countenance was very pale, and the tears were flowing down her cheeks.

Then he felt as if he were in a heavy, oppressive dream, from which he could not rouse himself. He saw the lights in the houses flit by the carriage; he did not notice that they ought long since to have accomplished the short distance between the president's house and Antonia's; he did not observe how the carriage thundered through a narrow winding gateway, rolling afterwards softly over a wooden bridge, rattling once more through another gateway and over another bridge; that instead of long rows of brick houses, villas with pretty gardens lined the wayside—he saw nothing but the fair pale face with the tears streaming down; he heard nothing but from time to time a low sob, and suddenly the carriage stopped.

"Where are we?" asked Munzer.

"Follow me!" replied Antonia, touching his hand.

The servant opened the carriage door.

"Are the horses to be taken out, ma'am?"

"No, not till I send word."

The villa, covered with creepers, had a small garden in front, in which a pretty fountain was playing. In the hall of the house Antonia's maid received the new-comers, a light in her hand. The girl cast a quick glance at the gentleman, but she must have been well trained, or such visitors were not of rare occurrence at the house, for she did not show any surprise. She opened a door, which led into a room opposite the entrance, lighted the wax-candles in the silver candelabra which stood upon a centre-table, and at a nod from her mistress she went out, without venturing to cast a second look at the stranger.

While the girl had lighted the candles, Antonia had slowly pulled off her gloves and her hood and laid both on the table; then, when the maid had left the room, she sat down in one of the richly-carved chairs which stood about the room, buried her face in her hands, and broke out into passionate weeping.

Munzer had stood by in silence; now he walked up to her and said in a low, firm voice:

"Baroness, we shall not understand each other thus, and still it is important for both of us not to go on in this way."

"You are right!" replied Antonia, resting her beautiful head in one hand, while the other hung down listlessly; "you are quite right."

She stared at vacancy. Suddenly she made a great effort to rouse herself. "Air, air!" she exclaimed; "I feel stifled. Come! I shall feel better out-doors; we can talk better there—come!"

From the room a glass-door opened upon the terrace, and from thence a few steps led down into the garden, where the fresh young foliage of magnificent old trees was glittering brightly in the rays of the moon. The stream whose waters blinked here and there through the shrubbery, breathed coolness into the superb avenues, which still retained the heat of the day. In the tops of thick tufted chestnut-trees, low dreamy voices of birds were heard, and from a lilac-bush came the gushing song of a nightingale. Sweet peace, soft repose, filled the beautiful garden; but they knew nothing of peace and rest, the two impassioned beings who were wandering about in the dusky avenues, silent from deep emotion.

Only once Antonia had seized Munzer's hands, exclaiming: "Have pity on me!" Then they had walked up and down again for some time in perfect silence. In vain did Munzer try to break the charm which seemed to hold his heart captive. Each time as he was about to utter the decisive words, his heart trembled within him—this ardent heart that would not be set free, that demanded imperiously its right to beat in unison with another as ardent, and to pour out its fiery passion into another passionate bosom. All that had passed through his soul a short time before, suddenly vanished; all his indignation at seeing himself once more held captive in bonds which he had resolved to break forever—he knew nothing and felt nothing but that the beautiful woman, pale and silent, was by his side, that he loved her again, and that this love would bring him death.

Suddenly Antonia paused, pressing her hands to her temples. "I have forgotten everything, everything!" she said.

"Then let it be forgotten!" said Munzer, with apathetic voice. "Can we do better than forget it all?"

"I dare not forget, I will not forget! I must tell you all. It will drive me to despair if I must live on as I have lived these last days."

"Despair?" said Munzer; "who tells you that we are not desperate already, both of us?"

"No, no!" cried Antonia, passionately; "I am not desperate. I know what I felt when I first saw you, what has since followed me in my waking moments and in my dreams, what I feel most clearly in the dark night—and people who feel so have not yet given themselves up to despair!"

Antonia had paused again; through the darkness her eyes shone with the dew of freshly-wept tears. Munzer gazed with trembling delight at those beautiful eyes.

"Fairest of women!" he murmured. "You are too fair for this earth! What do you know of the din and turmoil of the rude life of men? You could not be so fair if you knew it. And if you were to learn to know this misery through me, I should curse the hour in which I first saw you. But you shall never know it; to-morrow you will laugh at the seriousness with which you gave yourself up to-day to such an emotion. And you are right, perfectly right. To laugh and be merry—to kiss and be beautiful—that is your vocation. Why should you weep? unless it be because you know that tears make you still more beautiful!"

"I expected that from you," said Antonia, in a low, sad voice. "You judge me as the world judges me, and that—that I cannot endure! I have never troubled myself about the world's opinion—what is that stupid, foolish world to me? But you, you—I do not ask you for anything. I know you cannot love me, you will not love me. But you ought not therefore to despise me. No, not despise me!"

And Antonia raised her hands as if in supplication to Munzer.

"I despise you? What right could I have to despise you?"

"But you do it. I know, I feel you do it. When you entered my brother-in-law's rooms to-night, I saw it in the glance of your eyes, in the tremor of your lips. I ought to have known that you would not grant my request and stay

till I had seen you ; but if you had stayed, you would have seen that I should not have remained, and that I should not have made myself an instrument in my brother's hands. It was a mere accident that I left the party when you did."

"I do not understand you," said Munzer, seating himself by Antonia's side on a bench. "You speak in riddles. What did the president want of you?"

Antonia made no reply. The silvery light of the moon, which fell through the trees upon the bench on which they sat, showed Munzer that Antonia's fair face was almost disfigured by deep emotion, that her bosom rose restlessly, and that her whole figure was trembling and shaking. He took her hand ; it was icy.

"Let us go in!" he said. "Your light party dress and your shawl are not enough to protect you against the cool of the evening.

"No, no! Let us stay here!" said Antonia, withdrawing her hand from Munzer's, and wrapping herself more closely in her shawl. "I cannot speak in the house. Listen! You do not know what the president wanted of me? I will tell you. He ordered me not to let your hand go again if I once held it ; he ordered me to love you or at least to pretend to love you till you loved me also, till you were entirely devoted to me, till I could do—as he expressed it—with you whatever I chose."

"Ordered you?" said Munzer. "What right has the president to *order* you to do anything? And what makes him think at all that there are such relations between us?"

"He knew you had been at my house night before last."

"Through Colonel Hohenstein?"

"Perhaps so—but certainly through my valet Jean, whom I dismissed that same night, and who is now in the president's service."

"But, madam, instead of enlightening me, you add riddle to riddle."

"Do you say so in mockery, or do you mean what you say?" inquired Antonia, looking fixedly at Munzer.

"I speak what I think."

"You see," said Antonia with the same fixed searching glance, "if I were as clever as people say I am, I would confirm you in your good opinion of myself. For you are

good and noble, generous and warm-hearted, and would believe me if I said: what the world says about me is all a lie; I am not a hard-hearted coquette; I have not betrayed one man after another! I will tell you the truth—not because I fear the president, for if I were afraid of slander I should not have dismissed my man-servant, but because—oh God! I hardly know myself why I should humble myself so low before you.”

Spasmodic sobs broke from Antonia’s bosom, but she checked the violent emotion by a great effort, and continued in a calmer tone:

“You told me how humble and how wretched the circumstances were in which you grew up as a boy, and what trouble and suffering you endured as a young man—I have thought of it so much! I have waked up out of my sleep, because I dreamt you were pursued by wolves, fleeing across a glen between snow-covered mountains, and I could not help you. And then I said to myself again, he is a man and can help himself. I—I have been born and bred in wealth and splendor; not bred, though, for no one ever troubled himself about my education. I was allowed to do or not to do what I chose, without ever having one sober thought, without knowing anything except that I was rich and beautiful, and might enjoy life as I liked. Then I was married. Baron Hohenstein was just then returning from South America, where he had served for twenty years in the armies of as many republics. I liked him better than the others, because he flattered less clumsily than they did, and because he had seen and heard so much, and especially because his sombre, reserved manner interested me deeply. They told me he had been the wildest among the wild in former days. I felt no love for him. I never thought whether I should be happier with him than with anybody else; I only knew we should travel together over the wide world. That was the only condition I had made. And we did travel from one watering-place to another, and the poor man could not recover his health anywhere; and thus we travelled, one, two, three years, and with every year he became more sombre and more reserved, and I—well, I was young and fond of the world. I had not married to become nurse to a man whom I did not love, and who did not care for my love. He told me

so often enough himself. Then he died. I only felt that I was free once more ; that he was released from his sufferings, and I was released from the pain of witnessing them. I did not care to marry again, for if I had despised men before, I despised them now more than ever. I wanted a toy for my caprices, and—I told you I had been taught no principles but the one, to enjoy life as I could and might——”

Antonia's voice trembled as she said this, and her breath came and went as she whispered in low, broken accents, like one who is forced to speak amid severe pain :

“I never believed in love—never—never—till it was too late !”

She sighed deeply, and passed her hand over her brow and her eyes. Then she rose. Munzer followed her.

“Let us go in !” she said.

But they did not go in. They sauntered once more through the dusky avenues, silent and helpless, because both felt that the last word had not been uttered yet, and neither had the courage to utter that which must unite or part them forever.

At last Munzer said, and his deep voice trembled :

“Antonia, listen to me calmly. Let us think and act nobly. That is difficult, but it is after all the easiest. You love me. By telling me the story of your ill-fated life just now, you have given me the strongest proof of it that a woman can give. And I, Antonia, I tell you I have always believed in love, but I have never thought such love as I believed in was possible in this world, till—I saw you. And yet you are right : it is too late for you and for me. I cannot abandon my most sacred convictions ; I cannot combat for justice, if I am not just myself, if I no longer act up to my principle that every man must be content with his modest share of happiness, so that the others may have theirs also. Antonia, if I were to give way to the unbounded passion which draws me to you, I should burn down the hut in which my wife and my children dwell. I do not love my wife as I love you ; but I do love her. I do not love my children as I know I should love them if they were yours ; but I do love them. I must be content ; be you also content !”

Munzer could not see Antonia's face, as the moon had sunk behind a cloud, and tall trees overshadowed the place

where they stood ; but he heard her low sobs. Infinite sadness fell upon him ; his eyes began to burn ; his bosom swelled as if it must burst.

“ Antonia ! ”

The beautiful impassioned woman sank in his arms, and their hot kisses met.

Suddenly the clear, sharp ringing of the bell of a steamer sounded through the silent night. Startled, Antonia tore herself from Munzer, and hastened, hardly knowing what she was doing, deeper into the darkness of the garden. Munzer remained where he was, with beating heart ; he felt as if the iron tongue of the bell was summoning him back to the world and to his duty.

And at that moment he heard, through the noise of the swell, as it rushed up the river-side, the anxious cry of a drowning person : “ Help, help ! ”

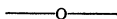
A wooden gate, a few yards only from where he stood, opened from the garden upon the road by the bank of the river. With a few steps, Munzer was near the water. A little boat was dancing on the waves ; in the boat a couple of little children, who stretched out their arms for help ; and at that moment a larger wave came up, the boat danced and rose, and one of the boys shot head-foremost into the roaring river.

With one effort of his strong arm, Munzer had broken down the fence. The next moment he was standing up to his arm-holes in the water, and there a few feet from him a head and an arm rose, but only to disappear again instantly. A few powerful efforts brought Munzer to the spot where the boy had sunk, and there close before him he rose once more. Munzer seized the child, and as he held it, while swimming to the shore, up to the faint light of the moon, he recognized with unspeakable horror the deadly pale face of his own son, of his child, whose sweet blue eyes had smiled up to him so joyously and so tenderly only a few hours ago.

With the strength of despair Munzer made his way to the shore ; he felt the ground under his feet ; he raised himself, holding the boy on high ; the tender little body hung loose and lifeless in his arms.

Munzer stood on shore—it was high time. The soil gave

way beneath him ; dimly, as through a mist, he saw several figures approaching ; he heard, or he thought he heard, a voice crying : “ My child ! my child ! ” Then a fearful roaring filled his ears ; all grew dark around him, and he sank down fainting.



CHAPTER VIII.

HOWEVER much the alderman desired to come to an understanding with his son, he could not make up his mind to meet him face to face till the morning of the following day. Yesterday it had seemed to him as if he were not yet prepared for an interview of such great importance. Nevertheless he had employed the rest of the day in pushing the affair, and had succeeded in carrying it so far forward that his son must act as his father desired if he did not wish to commit him most painfully. And that had been the alderman’s intention. “ I must meet him with a *fait accompli* ; if he cannot retrace his steps, he will go on.”

That was all very well, but the hardest part was yet to be done. Baron Hohenstein was painfully conscious that he and his son had differed through life on most questions, and on the gravest questions had differed most widely ; yet now harmony was all-important.

“ If he should refuse ! ” said the father to himself, as he locked his room before going up to Wolfgang—and at the thought, apprehensions overcame him which seemed to imperil all that had yet been done. But time pressed—in an hour the president’s wife had agreed to come with her daughters in order to inquire how the dear patient was to-day. By that time everything must be settled. The alderman summoned all his energy—the great game on which so much had been staked must be played out.

Whilst thus cunning hands were busily weaving the fine meshes in which Wolfgang was to be caught, he himself, unconscious of what was going on, was painting bright pictures of a happy future. The sense of new returning

strength, combined with the sweet consciousness—doubly sweet in a pure, chaste heart—that he loved and was beloved, had filled his soul with a joyousness such as he did not remember ever having felt since the days of his childhood. The picture appeared to him like the fair sunny land which the eager pilgrim sees from the height of a mountain, the sight of which rejoices his eye and his heart, and which he feels in advance will be the scene of a series of charming adventures. His knowledge of the way, to be sure, is not very accurate. He even apprehends the path may be hard to find, he may have to contend with many difficulties, and to overcome many obstacles. But that is only an additional charm. He is young, he is full of vigor and strength—everything, even the path, the unknown path, will easily be found.

A slight, almost timid knock at the door interrupted the young man in his peaceful meditations. No doubt it was his mother, who, strangely enough, had not yet been to see him this morning; she should find him asleep, and he would not answer—and then be surprised to find him sitting fully dressed, in an old arm-chair in the middle of the room. The knock was repeated—but louder and impatiently. “Come in!” said Wolfgang, instinctively rising from his chair and going to the door.

“It is you, papa!”

“Yes, my son!” said the alderman, embracing Wolfgang most tenderly. “I have not been allowed to see you for some days, you bad boy; but who taught you to be fast asleep every time your father came to see you? Well, well! I am glad to see you look so well again! But sit down, my boy; I am tired, very tired! These are hard times, and they give me more work to do than I like.”

“You really look quite exhausted, father!” said Wolfgang, sitting down again in his arm-chair, after his father had taken a seat on the sofa at some little distance from him. “How do things look in town, and out in the great world? I am entirely ignorant of what has happened since I came back from Rheinfeld, and in fact since I went there.”

“Because the affairs of our own life occupy us so exclusively, eh?” said the alderman, smiling. “Well, well, you need not blush so, my boy! Sooner or later I should have

heard it anyhow, and I confess I am very heartily glad to have heard it just now."

Wolfgang could not misunderstand his father's words, and yet they embarrassed him excessively. He had from childhood up been such a stranger to his father; they had hardly ever exchanged a kind, confidential word—and now he suddenly found his father in possession of all his most sacred secrets! For the first time in his life Wolfgang felt almost angry with his mother. Why did she tell his father? and without asking him, without preparing him for this scene? It was not kind in his mother.

The alderman was far too wise a man not to interpret rightly the confused mien and the dark, almost shy glance of his son's eye.

"We have to make up for past time," he said, "and I, my dear Wolfgang, am determined to avail myself of this joyful opportunity for the purpose. We ought to have thought before this happened, how important mutual confidence is to both of us for our happiness. However, nothing is lost. I could willingly leave your mother to receive your confidence, for what has been done so far can hardly have been of very great importance. But now the matter has a different aspect. You are on the point of determining, by a single act, the character of your whole future, and I know you too well not to be aware that the first step on the new road will pledge you to all the rest. Here the father must claim his rights and do his duty. You will not reject, I am sure, his friendly hand offered with hearty good-will and warmest affection. Will you, my son?"

The alderman had said this so gently, the deep emotion in his soul was so clearly expressed in his eloquent face, that Wolfgang took his father's hand with deep feeling—a feeling no doubt much increased in strength by his nervous weakness, the result of his indisposition.

The alderman was triumphant; he had not hoped for so easy a victory. He congratulated his son on the choice he had made, especially as there was no opposition to it on any side, and everybody looked upon it with favor, as a token that the long-desired reconciliation between the members of the family was at length to be permanently established. He said, laughing:

"You happy children fancied yourselves unobserved while you were admiring sun, moon, and stars in the beautiful park at Rheinfeld ; but we old people had long since put our heads together before your hearts came together. And do you know who took, from the beginning, the most lively interest in the whole project ? Your granduncle himself ! I believe the old gentleman would be inconsolable if by some misfortune or other the plan should not succeed ; and not only inconsolable, but angry—so angry that, violent and passionate as he is ——"

The alderman paused and passed his hand over his brow. He had noticed that during the last words Wolfgang's face had assumed a much less pleased expression. Indeed, the young man's delicacy was offended by this discovery of men who spied out his movements and formed plans behind his back, intruding as he thought improperly upon the holiness of his love. Still, he suppressed his sensitiveness, and said, with a somewhat forced smile :

"I assure you, papa, I have no desire to bring down granduncle's wrath upon myself, and I hardly imagine Camilla will think differently about that !"

"Well, that is very nice, very nice," said the alderman. "Your granduncle has spoken to you about the condition which he appends on his part to his consent, has he not ?"

"Granduncle ? A condition ?" replied Wolfgang, quite astonished.

"Hm, hm ! I wonder he did not ! I received a letter from him yesterday morning, and from what he said there I concluded he had spoken to you and agreed with you about that point. Has your granduncle never told you the plans he has formed for your future, for your career in life ?"

"He has often enough hinted at it, that he meant to do something, but I always took that merely for an expression of his good-will generally, and not in any special sense."

"Hm, hm ! Well, in this letter he mentioned his plan very much in detail. I am all the more pleased with his project, as I should have acted in that direction myself, years ago, if circumstances had been as favorable then as they are now."

"But, dear papa, what is that mysterious plan ?" asked Wolfgang, who felt more and more annoyed by the turn which the conversation had taken.

"Nothing else," replied the alderman, with half-affected solemnity, "than that we should all be pleased to see you follow that profession which is in my eyes the only one fit for a nobleman, which all the Hohensteins for many a generation have followed, with very few exceptions; which I followed myself, and only abandoned, with great grief, for your mother's sake——"

"I am to become a soldier?" cried Wolfgang, who had started up during the last words, and was walking up and down the room in very great excitement.

"An officer, if you please."

"Never—never!"

The alderman had most confidently expected this refusal, and was therefore by no means surprised. Nevertheless he thought it best to assume an air of astonishment and sorrow, and to say with subdued voice:

"And may I ask, my son, why you reject a profession to which so many of your ancestors have belonged?"

"I am not prepared, father," replied Wolfgang, "to give you a satisfactory answer to that question. My whole life, if you choose, is my answer. I see in every special privilege granted to one class at the expense of others, a grievous wrong, a crying injustice, a deep, painful sore in our social condition. Now, which class is more completely divided off from the rest of society than the officer class? where else will you find so many mediæval prejudices, full of injustice and absurdity, still surviving? Where else has a man of my views or my principles so little prospect to live in fraternal love with his fellow-men, as in that profession? No, my dear father, to belong to it would be a misfortune to me as it was to you."

"My misfortune?" said the alderman, offended. "I could have borne the misfortune of being an officer very well; I have, you know, but little sympathy with your new-fashioned, visionary ideas."

"That may be, father, but you have a heart, and your own history is the best evidence that men in that profession are not permitted such a luxury. Why would they not let you marry my mother? Because she was neither rich nor of noble birth! What have wealth and noble birth to do with love? Why did you leave the army? Because you did not

wish to belong to a class of men who suppress every noble feeling for the sake of a false sense of honor. Father, you cannot seriously advise me to choose a profession which stands in such a false, untenable position to all other classes of society."

"I have let you finish, dear Wolfgang," replied the alderman, with a calmness belied by the pallor of his cheeks and the evil expression of his eyes; "now listen to me! What you have said just now makes me regret more than ever that I have not sooner tried to make my influence felt in your heart—the influence of a man not highly educated, but sober, and I hope intelligent. You have been allowed to drift into a direction which fills me with great anxiety for your future; the same direction in which I see all those men engaged, who, like your uncle Peter, are ready to overthrow the existing forms of society for the sake of an impossible Utopia. But let us leave all theories, and think only of the case before us. The matter is this: Your granduncle offers you the prospect, if not the certainty, of becoming his heir; that is to say, of obtaining in one moment, and without any effort of your own, a fortune such as other men spend their lives in acquiring. In return he only asks you to comply with his request. And what is it he asks? That you should become an officer in the army and marry Camilla! If you refuse what Fortune offers you thus with liberal hand, you have not the slightest prospect of ever calling Camilla your own, for your granduncle is not the man to allow himself to be offended with impunity. He will undoubtedly withdraw his favor from you, and the others will follow his example. Then you are again where you were before you went to Rheinfeld, a poor student, who has no better prospects for life than the son of your tailor or shoemaker, if he has earned enough money in the sweat of his face to send a son to the university."

"Better that," murmured Wolfgang, "than to become an apostate!"

The alderman rose from the sofa and said in a quiet tone, but with pale lips and quivering with excitement:

"Well then! follow your convictions! Sacrifice your own happiness, and the happiness of a girl who loves you, and whom you profess to love! And if that is not enough sacri-

fice, you can console yourself with the thought that you might have saved your father from ruin, and that you have let him perish for the sake of your convictions."

He covered his face with his hands and went to the door.

Wolfgang hastened after him and held him.

"For God's sake, father, what do you mean?"

"Let me go!" replied the alderman. "What is your father's fate to you?"

"Father, I beseech you, do not leave me thus! Forget what I said! Do not leave me with such a fearful reproach on my conscience! Speak out! You can trust me; I am no longer the thoughtless boy I may seem to be from my words. I am not an ungrateful son, to whom his father's fate is indifferent. I beseech you, father, tell me what oppresses you!"

Wolfgang had gently drawn his father back to the sofa, and sitting down by his side, looked anxiously at him with his honest blue eyes.

"I thank you, my son, for your sympathy," said the alderman, with a low, deeply-moved voice. "I know you are kind-hearted, and what I said just now was rashly said. Forgive me! I wanted, if possible, not to speak of myself at all, so as to leave you free to do what you chose, but it was not to be so. I am ruined, Wolfgang. I must speak candidly. I stand so, that if I do not obtain assistance, I shall have to apply for the benefit of the bankrupt-law. But I cannot and shall not survive such a disgrace. And yet I see no other way to escape than a reconciliation with my uncle, the only man who is able to help, and who will help the father of his future heir, his favorite nephew. If you comply with his urgent request, as he states it in his letter to me, you can fairly count upon half of his fortune as your property, and thus help would come to me from him from whom I should like best to receive it—from you, my dear son!"

The alderman had spoken himself into such an emotion that the tears came into his eyes. He embraced his son, sobbing violently. Wolfgang was touched.

"Dear father," he said, in a low but firm voice, "you can count upon me. After all, a man may be an honest man in every position in life; but I know of no position in life in which I would not despair, if I had abandoned my father in

the hour of misfortune. And now one thing more. Does mamma know of your embarrassment?"

"No, and she must never know it."

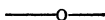
"That is what I meant to say. She has trouble enough as it is, and I fear the prospect of seeing me in officer's uniform will not contribute to her peace. Does she know it?"

"Yes; I told her yesterday."

"I thought there was something weighing on her mind that she could not or would not tell me. That is, no doubt, why she has not been up here all the morning! Shall we see where she is?"

"With pleasure, my darling boy," said the alderman. "Rest on my arm, even if it were only to give your mother the pleasure of seeing us enter her room together. Come, my boy!"

And the alderman smiled as he took his son's arm in his own with friendly care—the smile of the gambler who has followed the rolling of the little ball with anguish, and now hears the banker call out the numbers on which he has staked his last gold piece.



CHAPTER IX.

THEY did not find Margaret in her room. Ursula said she was probably in the garden.

The large garden in the rear of the house extended far down between neighboring houses till it reached the town-wall. The house and the garden belonged, as did almost the whole street, to the convent opposite, and the alderman had every reason to be content with his landlords. They required only a very moderate rent, had never raised it during twenty years, and troubled themselves so little about their tenants, that the alderman could occasionally speak of "his own house" without fear of contradiction. But Wolfgang also, whose earliest recollections were connected with this house, could not imagine that others should ever dwell in these rooms; and as for Margaret, she had

quite recently assured Wolfgang that she did not know how she would be able to live if she should ever have to part with her garden. The garden was her favorite resort, and here she spent, during the warm season, nearly all the hours in which the weather permitted her being out of doors. Early in the morning, already she could be seen almost daily wandering slowly up and down between the flower-beds and in the shady walks. Those were Margaret's happiest hours. The soft, balsamic air of the garden was the most congenial atmosphere for her gentle heart, so full of love, so thirsting after love. Here she could, undisturbed, indulge in all her fancies ; could dream herself far away from this rude, hard, pitiless world—far away in regions where mine and thine were no longer ruling motives, and where men dared love and be loved, without asking first how it affected their credit. And never did Margaret seek refuge here more eagerly than when she had some sorrow which oppressed her heart in the small close rooms. Here, amid her roses and carnations, she could breathe more freely ; here she could find tears, and with her tears that calm, humble resignation, the last refuge of characters which are weak by nature or broken by cruel fate.

Margaret was in such hours like the wounded bird that crouches in the furrow drawn by the plough-share, and quietly bleeds to death. Since the day before, this feeling of being wounded unto death had not left her a moment. Wolfgang's attachment to Camilla was to her an unmistakable evidence that even in her son's heart there was something which she could not comprehend, with which she could not sympathize ; and in the project to force him into a military career, she saw the completion of the triumph which those proud, uncongenial Hohensteins achieved over her, the poor printer's daughter. She had sacrificed her own peace, the calm, quiet happiness of her life, to the arrogance of this family ; and now her son also, her only, dearly-beloved son, was to be torn from her, to serve their selfish interests. But Peter had predicted years ago that this would come to pass ! that the nobles were like fire, which can live only by destruction, and that she would not be able to save herself or her son from this fire ! At that time, when Arthur Hohenstein swore on his knees that he loved her more than rank and position

and riches, more than his life, she had shut her ear to her brother's warning voice ; but since then every year had made her feel more clearly the bitter truth in those words, and the yesterday had shown her the prophecy literally fulfilled. She felt as if since yesterday an abyss had opened between her and her son, as if she was standing quite alone now in the world, a stranger in her husband's house, a stranger in the old house in River street ! No, not a stranger there ! Her brother Peter would never forsake her ; her sister Bella might in her warmth speak harshly, but she would, nevertheless, be ready to share with her her last mouthful, as in old times ; and now she had, also, that sweet, dear girl, of whom she had become so fond in a few hours. But she had been told she must not love her relatives, she must have no relatives, she must not spoil her husband's plans by her family sentimentality !

"Ahem, ahem !"

Margaret started and looked up at the high garden-wall, covered with grape-vines ; but she could not help smiling in the midst of her grief, as she saw right above her, old Moss, who was leaning with both arms on the upper edge, and apparently stared fixedly at the white clouds that were slowly floating across the blue sky. Margaret and old Moss were very good friends, and it was not the first time that neighbor Moss manifested in this manner his interest in the fair lady.

"Good morning, neighbor !" said Margaret.

Moss looked once more, protecting his eyes with his hand, at the clouds, as if the voice he had heard must have come from there, and only after that down into the garden and upon Margaret.

"All well ?" said Moss.

"Quite well," replied Margaret.

"The boy ?"

"Also well !"

Moss shook his head, as if he doubted her words.

"Harness wrong !" he said.

Margaret looked up inquiringly at the strange old man.

Moss pointed with the thumb of his right hand over his left shoulder in the direction in which Rheinfeld might possibly lie, and said,

"Hohensteins are Hohensteins !"

Thereupon he disappeared from the wall with a rapidity which shook the rounds of the ladder on which he had been standing.

Margaret was not quite sure of what the old man could have meant by his last mysterious words ; but as she turned around, the cause of his sudden disappearance became evident in the person of her husband and her son, whom she saw coming up the garden-walk, arm in arm. Arm in arm ! She had never seen them thus before. The sight wounded her heart. Her husband now occupied her place ; she had been driven from her Wolfgang's heart ; she was nothing now.

Wolfgang made himself free from his father's arm, and hastened to meet his mother, to press her with the full tenderness of his heart to his bosom, still trembling with the excitement of the last scene with his father.

It required nothing more to melt the stony despair which had overpowered the poor woman, into tears of joy. Warmed by the full sunlight of her son's affection, she threw herself on his heart and sobbed : " If you only love me, Wolfgang, I do not mind what happens."

The alderman stepped up.

" Good morning, Margie ! " he said, seizing her hand and carrying it up to his lips with his own graceful courtesy ; " you did not think we two would surprise you here ? But you need not be afraid for Wolfgang ! I told you we Hohensteins have good constitutions. Yesterday half dead, and to-day sound as a fish in water. Is it not a pleasure to see how quickly the boy has recovered ? "

" But would we not better go in ? " asked Margaret, replying with a sweet smile to her husband's gallantry. " I fear it will be too much after all for Wolfgang ! "

" By no means, mamma dear," said Wolfgang ; " on the contrary, the beautiful warm sun, the singing of the birds, and the balmy air—all do me good. Your Eden has wonderfully improved since I saw it last ! Then it looked rather bare ; now all is blooming and growing as handsomely as in the park at Rheinfeld."

The alderman laughed. " In the park at Rheinfeld ! Your Eden ! Of course, nothing can compare with that ! But you are right ; the old park is magnificent, thoroughly aristocratic in spite of being so neglected. You will like it,

too, dear Margie, when the old grizzly-beard no longer looks out of the windows between the ornate carvings, and when Wolfgang and Camilla rule at the château. You need not look so anxious, Margie! Wolfgang and I understand each other fully. His choice has my consent and the approbation of all his relatives; there is no need for secrecy here, as when I went a courting. Yes, Margie, those days were different; rather more romantic, perhaps, but prodigiously embarrassing. Here all is clear and simple; everybody knows what he means to do and what he ought to do. And I have also talked with Wolfgang about the point that gave so much anxiety, Margie. Wolfgang is a dear boy, who stands by his father and is able to give up his own preferences when he can do something for the welfare of the family. You shall not repent of your readiness, my boy! Officers lead a very pleasant kind of life, especially if they are well supported, as you will be by the old gentleman, and also by the president, whose special interest it will be to push you as fast as he can. And as for your favorite pursuits—your books and your piano—why, you know nobody has more leisure for such things than an officer; and Goethe or Schiller—I forget which, but one of them says somewhere: ‘In our society nobody has so agreeable a position as an officer’—or something of the kind. But, great heavens! I verily believe we are going to have most charming visitors: my sister and the girls!”

The alderman was pleasantly surprised, although the visitors appeared punctually at the appointed hour. Margaret began to tremble, and Wolfgang had evidently lost the modest firmness which generally distinguished him so favorably among other young men. The president’s wife, on the contrary, seemed even more self-confident than usual. *From afar off already she gave them all to understand that she knew everything, that she gave her consent to everything, and that she came now to express her consent formally and publicly.* She hastened a few steps in advance of her daughters, and embraced with ardent affection first Margaret, then the alderman, and at last Wolfgang also, the latter with the words, “My dear, dear son!” Camilla followed her mother’s example with much tact and a clear comprehension of the situation.

“Bravo! bravo!” said the alderman; “the dear children! but let us leave the young people to themselves. They will have much to tell each other. We can go into the garden-house, and they will find a snug, secret place somewhere else.”

Wolfgang and Camilla did not wait for further hints. The next moment they were alone, and hastened, arm in arm, further into the garden, which seemed, with its grand old trees, the dense foliage of which hardly allowed here and there a ray of sunlight to pass, and with its tall, blooming shrubs, in which the birds were singing merrily, to be specially made for lovers who seek a solitude. Wolfgang had forgotten all his cares and troubles when he saw his beloved near him; and these cares and anxieties which a few moments before oppressed his heart, now only served to make him appreciate more the happiness of loving this charming creature and of being beloved by her. And surely even a colder heart than his might have been carried away by Camilla’s dream-like beauty. She had never appeared to Wolfgang so marvellously glorious. His eyes hung with a delight, which increased every moment, on this being on whom Nature had capriciously lavished her most attractive outlines and her fairest colors. What tenderness beamed from those light-brown eyes, overshadowed by dark eye-lashes! How charming were those delicately-shaped lips, those nobly-formed cheeks tinged now with deep blushes! How round and slender were the fingers of the small, soft hand, as she slowly drew off her gloves, when they seated themselves side by side under a huge chestnut-tree! And how well the small foot harmonized with it, which she quickly drew back under her dress as Wolfgang looked eagerly at it! And how slender and graceful the delicate form, which Wolfgang touched as he sat down by her! The very voice seemed to be softer and sweeter than any music he had ever heard; and yet she said but a few words in reply to his rapturous eloquence, and an unbiassed listener would have been struck by the fact that not one of these words bespoke an active inner life in the fair speaker.

The alderman and his sister-in-law had not remained long in the garden-house. A little spider had run across the lady’s hand—and she hated spiders. The gallant alderman

proposed a short walk, and Aurelia declared her intention to keep her aunt company, as she seemed to be not quite well. The two former had scarcely left, when Aurelia turned warmly to Margaret, and seizing both of her hands, said in a low voice: "I love you very dearly; you have such good, truthful eyes. You can trust me?"

"Willingly," said Margaret, not a little astonished, perhaps even a little frightened by this sudden appeal, but gratefully accepting the friendship of her niece with the readiness of timid and forsaken people.

"I am a little light-headed," said Aurelia, moving close up to Margaret and looking sharply at her face with her bright, lively eyes; "at least so they say, and I suppose it must be true. That means, I like to be gay, and I am passionately fond of dancing; but I mean it well, and if I love anybody I could go through fire and water for him if there were any call for it."

"That is nice!" said Margaret, who sympathized with her new friend at least in this point. "You are a dear, sweet child!"

"Do you think so?" asked Aurelia. "My mother always says I am not."

"Oh!" said Margaret.

"Yes, and why?" continued Aurelia, speaking more eagerly and almost in a whisper; "because I do not know how to flatter people as Camilla does, and because I like to speak my mind freely, as I did this morning. I said, 'If Wolfgang really loves Camilla so supernaturally dearly, he will come of himself. I do not think it looks particularly delicate to run to his house under the pretext of inquiring after his health.' Well, my dear aunt, I must tell you candidly, your Wolfgang is no doubt a very good young man, and he certainly is very handsome, but he is too learned for me, and too sedate—*enfin*! he is not to my taste. But that does not matter. I shall be heartily glad if he gets a good wife, and Camilla ——"

Aurelia shrugged her round white shoulders, on which the mantilla could by no means be made to stay, and made a little grimace.

"Is not good? was that it? She would not be a good wife?" said Margaret, full of anxiety.

"As you take it," replied Aurelia, drawing up her mantilla; "we often quarrel. Well, that may happen. It would be tedious if people were always of the same opinion, but when I say: 'Camilla, we'll be good friends again,' she is silent, or says perhaps, 'yes,' but in her heart she does not forgive me. And then she is so sly that nobody ever knows what she is after; I do not think even mamma knows."

"Oh, my God, my God!" sighed Margaret, from the depth of her careworn heart.

"What is the matter, dear aunt?" asked Aurelia.

"And she is to be my Wolfgang's wife!" said Margaret, bitterly.

"Ah yes!" said Aurelia. "Well, that is not so very bad in itself. One can get along with her pretty well; but then you must know her as well as I do. And that was my reason for telling you all I have said. I thought you ought to know. And you can tell your Wolfgang little by little, you know, and then he can manage her. And as for money, why, granduncle will take care of that. Camilla and Wolfgang are his favorites, you know; we only run alongside. It is outrageous, 'pon honor! as Cousin Cuno said last night; but it can't be helped, and we must not get angry, for anger makes people look yellow and ugly, as I replied. There comes the whole military company! What a family feast it will be! Don't be troubled, dear aunty, I'll stand by you."

The alderman and the president's wife had seen the newcomers from another part of the garden, and now advanced to meet them in a walk lined on both sides with hedge-rows. The brothers shook hands; the sisters embraced and kissed; the lieutenant and the ensign bowed—heels meeting, and the right hand on their caps—over and over again. Thus they approached the garden-house, and hardly had Margaret appeared in the door, when the colonel's wife hastened—just as her sister-in-law had done a little while ago—in advance of the others, to embrace her dear dear sister with overflowing tenderness. "I took the liberty to call yesterday, dear Margaret, but you could not leave your sick Wolfgang. Last night your husband told me that your son was quite well again, and so we could not deny ourselves the pleasure of bringing you in person our hearty congratulations on this happy occasion, in which we all take so deep an interest."

And Selma repeated her embrace with an effusion which compelled Aurelia to hold her handkerchief to her mouth, so as not to let her unseasonable cough be heard.

The colonel and his sons had in the meantime come up also. The colonel had smoothed his frowning face as well as he could, and went so far in his courtesy as to kiss Margaret's hand, an example which was promptly imitated by Lieutenant Cuno and Ensign Odo.

"I come, madam," said the colonel, "to see if I can give my volunteer any longer leave of absence, and my boys here wish to welcome their new comrade. But where is your son? I shall have to send my *tirailleurs* out!"

The colonel uttered a low, hoarse laugh, which did not sound pleasant, but resembled the laugh of the wolf in the fable, when he saw Red-Riding-Hood walking across the forest-meadow to her grandmother's cottage.

"Suppose we open ranks and search the garden?" said Lieutenant Cuno.

"Or recall the outposts!" squeaked Ensign Odo.

"I am afraid the young gentlemen will not be called upon to show their knowledge of tactics, for there are our friends coming, arm in arm," said the alderman.

"Where, where?" cried the colonel's wife, looking through her glasses in all directions. "To be sure, there are the darlings; I must go to meet them."

"Does she think she is the principal person here?" whispered the president's wife to the alderman.

"Never mind her," was the whispered reply; "she only works for us."

Selma brought back Wolfgang and Camilla in triumph. The latter accepted the congratulations of the family with downcast eyes, Wolfgang with the open candor which he felt to-day more than ever to be his special duty. He had no suspicion that the colonel, who patted him on the shoulder and congratulated him, with a sombre smile, on the "sword" which he would in a few days wear by his side, would have run that "sword" with pleasure right through him, if the thing had been as easy as it was desirable. He did not know that his cousin Cuno had said only last night to Baron Willamowski: "We will trim the young rooster's comb as soon as we have him in the barracks"—a *bon mot*

which the baron had acknowledged with a hearty curse. He would have considered it high treason against mankind to look upon all these smiling assurances of love and hearty sympathy as covers under which these people—his mother and perhaps Aurelia alone excepted—concealed their desire to make him a tool for their own purposes or their downright hatred of him. He thought his relatives as sincere in their desire for a reconciliation as he himself was, and that they had sacrificed their pride and their vanity as readily for the sake of a good deed, as he had sacrificed his for his father's well-being. He did not dream for a moment that his grand-uncle would make him his sole heir ; he was happy enough to think that he was willing to make no difference between all the sons of his brothers. This consciousness gave him, during this unexpected meeting of the whole family, an air of cordiality which was the very opposite to the cold reserve which he had thought it his duty to assume towards his relatives when he met them at Rheinfeld. The interpretation was equally unkind in both cases. Then they had called him a plebeian and a hypocrite ; now they looked upon him as an impudent parvenu. They never doubted but that Wolfgang was a disagreeable man, but clever and dangerous, and on that account doubly to be hated.

The president's wife, however, did not share these sentiments. The advantage in Wolfgang's marriage with Camilla was too clearly on her side ; and besides, there was after all in her indolent, spoilt heart, some little remnant of good-nature left, which occasionally served her well in cases where sentimental emotion seemed to be called for. This was one of them ; and it made her, therefore, downright angry when Selma asked to have the privilege of entertaining the whole company—"quite *entre nous*, my dear, you know"—this evening, in honor of the "betrothal." "I think, dear Selma," she said, rising to the full height of her stately figure, "I have a better right, as the mother of the young lady. Moreover, Philip commissioned me expressly, before going to attend an unavoidable meeting of the board, to invite you all to our house this evening. I think, dear Selma, a little reflection will convince you how just and how natural my husband's wish was."

Selma was on the point of making a reply, which would

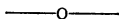
hardly have contributed to increase the harmony of the company ; but a dark look from her husband bade her be silent. "We shall be there punctually, dear sister," he said, kissing his sister's hand. "You must excuse Selma if she takes a special interest in the future officer of her regiment, for we all look upon her as the mother of the corps."

"Will you be strong enough, mamma?" asked Wolfgang.

"I hope so," whispered Margaret.

"And I think we had better go," added Aurelia, who had never left her place by Margaret's side. "Aunty's hands are quite cold, and I see in her eyes that she wants to be quiet."

The company left the garden. When the last had disappeared among the bushes, the head of old Moss reappeared on the wall, directly above the garden-house in which they had been sitting. He shook his fist and murmured something between his teeth. If the little finch sitting at a short distance from him on the edge of the wall and looking with his bright eyes at the strange old man, could have understood the speech of men, he would have heard the mysterious words : "Hohensteins are Hohensteins !"



CHAPTER X.

THE president's wife looked upon her daughter's betrothal as a very good pretext for giving the reins to her insatiate fondness for pleasure. With a restlessness which one would not have expected in a lady who was generally very phlegmatic, she arranged little parties with dancing for the young people ; and when she discovered that her rooms, magnificent as they appeared to others, were too small for the number invited, she proposed excursions in the neighborhood. This occurred nearly every other day, and she assured her friends that she could nowhere find the peaceful quiet after which she longed in vain in town, except in the beautiful valleys of the neighboring mountains.

"I confess, dear Kettenberg," she said to the young

painter, "when I see my Camilla so rosy and so happy, I feel as if I myself were once more young."

"Does not that sound as if you had wrinkles in your face, like an old woman by Murillo or Rembrandt?" replied Kettenberg.

"Oh, not that exactly!" said Clotilda; "it is not so much the body that is growing old, as the heart, dear Kettenberg—the heart!"

"Now it is the heart!" laughed the painter. "Hearts, Mrs. President, like yours remain young forever."

"Oh, you artists!" sighed the flattered lady; "innocent children, who believe in perennial youth! But tell me, Kettenberg, what are we to do to-night? We must have something quite out of the common way!"

"What do you say," replied Kettenberg meditatively, "if everybody for once stayed quietly at home? That is certainly very uncommon, and would be quite piquant."

"For heaven's sake! To stay at home alone, with this exuberant fondness of life, this irrepressible desire for intercourse! You do not know what you say, Kettenberg. What do you advise, Camilla?"

"Perhaps tableaux once more," suggested Camilla. "Wolf-gang is an enthusiastic admirer of Goethe; he would be delighted to see me as Mignon in a white dress, with wings."

"As an angel by half," said Kettenberg, "while he ordinarily sees you as an angel altogether; that would be retrograding. But the idea of tableaux is a good one; I have some new ideas."

Kettenberg came, as usual, to the assistance of the somewhat indolent fancy of the ladies; the tableaux were arranged in all haste, and they succeeded so well that, as the painter maintained with much self-appreciation, the old days of Weimar and Goethe himself had come again—the past grand-master of all *maîtres de plaisir* might have learned something from them to-night.

Thus it went on for a week, every day and all days. Wolf-gang had not seen so much festivity during his whole life as he saw this week; he had never heard so much laughing and merry-making, nor been so merry himself. But if Camilla left the company for a moment, the charm was broken; or if he was by chance alone after so many happy hours

trifled away by her side, the dark cares arose once more from the depths of his soul and cast deep shadows upon the gay pictures of his bright, happy life. The transition from his former mode of life to this new sphere was too sudden and abrupt not to be felt by him most painfully. He found in the new society to which he had been transferred, elegant forms and a chosen language ; but the forms were hollow and empty, and the language seemed to serve no other purpose than to express absolute nothings or crooked and squinting thoughts. This playing with words, this talking for the sake of talk only, these conversations which flew restlessly from one subject to another, exhausting none—all this began gradually to weary him, to oppress him, and to put him out of humor.

And now he was to take the first official step in the career into which he saw himself so suddenly forced. The next morning he was to present himself to Major Degenfeld, whose battalion the colonel had ordered his nephew to enter. Wolfgang felt very uncomfortable when he thought of this visit. He was, to be sure, still determined to make this sacrifice for his father's sake, and the latter had taken every opportunity during the last days to impress upon his son the absolute necessity for it. As he said himself, "he had let Wolfgang see his cards," and shown him how "bad a hand he held," because he could not possibly sustain his credit without help, and such help was to be obtained only from the rich uncle at Rheinfeld, after his complete reconciliation with the whole family. "You cannot imagine, Wolfgang," he would say, "how I have been hampered in all my enterprises by the bans under which I have been put by my family in consequence of my marriage with your mother. The world is so constituted that it looks with the greatest mistrust upon a man who has been given up by his own family, especially when the family is rich and powerful. He may do what he chooses—he is, and remains an outcast, a pariah. A business man who has only a small capital to go upon, as in my case, has to borrow money continually. That is easy enough when a man has credit ; but not so when he has no credit, and I had none. I have all my life been in the hands of the usurers ; for the more solid business men said : "He must be doing badly, or his rich relatives

would invest some of their money in his business." And although they knew very well that in my case there were other reasons for it, they pretended to know nothing, in order to refuse me assistance on that pretext. All this will be changed as soon as you are engaged to marry the president's daughter, an officer in the colonel's regiment, and heir presumptive, or, if you insist upon it, one of the heirs to the old gentleman at Rheinfeld. And then, my dear boy, pray think not of yourself—though I know you think of yourself least of all in this matter—nor of your father, but of your mother. She is now weeping secret tears at the idea of your becoming an officer, and with her experience in life that is not to be wondered at ; but, Wolfgang, how much more bitterly would she weep if I were compelled to stop payment, to give up this house, and with it the garden which is her greatest pleasure, and perhaps absolutely necessary for her life! No, Wolfgang, I honor your scruples, although from my standpoint I cannot share them. I should have wished to spare you the sacrifice, but you can see yourself there is no choice left! Therefore make up your mind bravely, my boy! Go to-morrow to Major Degenfeld. He is a very pleasant man, and will receive the son of his old comrade with open arms. Besides, he is reputed to be a man of liberal views, and you will understand each other."

"That is some comfort!" replied Wolfgang, as he rose from his easy-chair, which just now was anything but easy for him, and walked to the window. The night was dark ; the outlines of the huge old trees beyond the convent-wall were scarcely visible against the sky. A single star shone amid dark clouds. Wolfgang thought of the delightful evening at Rheinfeld when he met Camilla in the avenue, where the nightingales were singing, and confessed to her his love. At that time, also, a single star had been in the sky ; but the star had shone and sparkled as if it could never vanish again, and the whole heaven had been filled with unspeakable glory. To-day all was darkness and solitude, and now the last star disappeared, on which Wolfgang's eyes had been fastened with a kind of superstitious veneration. He felt it was a bad omen. The star had reminded him of Camilla!

He made a supreme effort and mastered this melancholy

fit. He rose and opened the window. "Father is right," he said to himself; "there is no choice. I must go my way, little as I may like it; and I will do it like a man, looking neither to the right nor to the left, but with firm step and upright head. Those were not always the best and most pleasing roads on which the heroes of old travelled in search of the Golden Fleece and their sweet princesses, and yet they were heroes—nay, often they became heroes by pursuing their purpose over those painful and enchanted ways. Well, I also have my sweet princess to woo and to win, and they say I am to have the Golden Fleece into the bargain. To-morrow I shall start on my journey, and the first dragon to overcome will be this Major Degenfeld. To-morrow, then, the battle—but just now we will go to bed, and, if possible, dream of our sweet princess."

But Wolfgang dreamt very little that night of his beloved; and on the contrary, a good deal of a grim old blade, gray-haired and gray bearded, with a dark frown on his brow, and a huge swagger in his voice, who of course could be nobody else but him called Degenfeld, major and commander of the second battalion of the ninety-ninth regiment of infantry. Fortunately the man in the dream and the man whom Wolfgang really saw next morning, were very different persons. When the young man appeared next forenoon at the appointed hour in the ante-room of his future commander, a clerk received him and at once ushered him into the major's room.

Major Degenfeld was a slender man of medium height, some forty-odd years old, with a well-formed forehead, bald at the sides, and large, mild-looking eyes, which gave him far more the appearance of a *savant*, familiar with the great world, than of a soldier. He rose from his writing-table, advanced courteously to meet his visitor, and invited him to take a seat on the sofa. The first impression was strengthened yet by the comfortable loose gown of wadded silk which he wore, and especially by the fitting-up of his room, which contained a large library, arranged on simple shelves all around the wall. The table was covered with green morocco; the sofa had evidently seen long and hard service; books, pamphlets, and newspapers were strewn all about; and the very atmosphere of the room, with the

faint odor of so many books, had something peaceful and soothing.

Major Degenfeld's manner and speech harmonized perfectly with his appearance. There was not a trace here of stiff formality, no sharpness of tone, no rudeness or affected carelessness of language ; the major's carriage was perfectly simple and natural, the movements of his delicate hands very graceful, and he spoke easily and yet elegantly. At the same time, he spoke with so much cordial sympathy of Wolfgang's former studies and of his favorite authors, that the young man did not know what to admire most, the vast erudition of the soldier, or the gentle courtesy of the commander.

The major also seemed to be particularly pleased with the modest and yet highly intelligent manner of the young man. He looked with his gentle eyes at the brow and the lips of his visitor, as if to examine them critically ; and when Wolfgang blushed slightly upon being thus inspected, he said, smiling :

"Pardon me, my dear friend ; it is a bad habit of mine, very disagreeable to others, no doubt, to study most accurately the physiognomy of men with whom I expect to be connected for any length of time. For I have found that, after all, men look very much what they really are. You may excuse my imitation of Lavater all the more readily, I think, as I am convinced that if your heart corresponds with your face—and that, I told you, is my theory—we shall soon be very good friends."

"You are very kind, major."

"I am only candid from principle, I may say. And as a candid man, I must not leave certain circumstances unmentioned, which are in fact open secrets, or at least well known in the whole regiment, which would not remain unknown to you if you had spent a week in our midst. I can, therefore, speak openly with you about them. You must know, then, that your uncle and myself are very far from being on a friendly footing with each other. I have even reason to apprehend that he honors me with his very particular hatred, as he takes pains to show me in various ways. I have, so far as I know, never given him direct cause for it, and must therefore assume that it is simply an antipathy of his. It is

true that he and I differ totally in our views about our profession, probably because our characters and the education we have received are so very different. You may imagine, now, how surprised I was to learn that the colonel had ordered you to my battalion by preference, and I confess that I have as yet not been able to imagine what could have been his motive for doing it, especially as there are more vacancies in the other battalions than in mine, and the two commanders are men much more after his own heart, and his special friends. Perhaps he only wished to prove his impartiality in giving me, his special adversary, the privilege of forming his nephew; or perhaps he tries thus to bring about a reconciliation between us, which he thinks I could not well reject for the sake of the service. However that may be, you, my young friend, shall not suffer by it. I shall do what I can to help you on in the new path, which is by no means without thorns. And now allow me to ask you a question, Baron Hohenstein, which may appear very indiscreet, but which, for special reasons, is of great importance to me. I am told it is not exactly your own free will which brings you to us?"

Wolfgang felt the blood rushing to his face.

"I do not know, major," he replied, after a pause, "whether I should have the courage to answer this question before anybody else with perfect candor. I only know that I have not the courage to tell you anything but the whole truth. Your information is correct. So far from entering the army of my own accord, I have been forced to make a very great effort to overcome my repugnance, and I should certainly never have taken a step so utterly at variance with all my inclinations, my habits and principles, if certain circumstances, which I hope you will not require me to mention in detail, had not made it my duty."

The major nodded his head. "I thought," he said, "a man who, like you, had so long been devoted to science with such industry and such brilliant results, would surely not forsake it except upon compulsion. I know, moreover, enough of your family history to guess after a manner how the *deus ex machina* looks, whose imperative order has suddenly transformed you from a follower of Themis into a son of Mars. I am all the better able to put myself in your

place, as your case is an exact repetition of my own fate. I also had been a student for several years, and never thought of giving up the books I loved so dearly, when fate in the shape of—it does not matter in what shape—took the pen from my hand and put the sword in its place.”

The major looked thoughtfully down; then he turned again to Wolfgang, and said, with his kindly smile:

“You will therefore have to go through the same trials through which I have passed, and if I mistake not my experience will be yours. But you have one great advantage over me. Your apprenticeship will be much shorter than mine, though it may be a little harder. Great changes are impending over our army. The European armies cannot remain what they have been; least of all our German armies. There is but one alternative for us. We must become a Pretorian cohort, or the king’s army becomes the people’s army. I am not inclined to think the change will be brought about very suddenly, or all at once; our progress with us must keep step with the progress made in other departments. We cannot, for instance, expect to have a national army before we have a nation. But we shall have a national army ere long. That is my innermost conviction—without it I would have long since left the service. But if we wish to have one quickly, we must necessarily have the purpose and the means used to attain it fully known and appreciated in the ranks. Therefore I welcome every intelligent man who comes to us with special satisfaction, and I am as glad to see you come, Baron Hohenstein, as if you were a long-expected guest. You do not come of your own accord, but we soldiers know best that while we cannot choose our post, we can do our duty faithfully wherever we are placed, and all the more faithfully the more dangerous the post is.”

An orderly entered, reporting to the major that it was time to get ready for parade.

Wolfgang was about to go.

“Stay a moment longer,” said the major; “there is no hurry. I am always summoned some time before the hour, because I dislike exceedingly to be interrupted in my work for immediate duty elsewhere. Have you discussed with your uncle the different ways to obtain your commission as lieutenant? And have you decided which you will choose?”

"Yes, sir. The colonel has advised me to ask you as soon as possible for leave of absence to go to Berlin, and there to prepare myself privately for the examination. He thinks I can thus succeed most easily and most quickly."

"Is it true, Baron Hohenstein, what report says, that you are engaged to your fair cousin Camilla?"

"Yes, major."

"And yet you consent to being exiled thus?" asked Major Degenfeld, smiling. "Well, you must settle that for yourself, and perhaps you will do best to undergo the unpleasant preparation away from home. I think you could have pursued your studies just as well here as in Berlin. But, as I said, you must settle that for yourself. Only one point I must beg leave to suggest to you. Things are not looking well just now in Berlin; and although I hope the convention which is to prepare the constitution will do the best that can be done, it is still not to be expected that the agitated waves will settle down at once. On the contrary, I think we shall have more stormy days yet. You will be so situated in Berlin that you can look at these storms from the safe haven of your forced inactivity. Do not deprive yourself of this advantage by involving yourself in the conflict of parties, but avail yourself of it for the purpose of studying accurately and conscientiously the parties themselves, their defects and their merits, their aims and their resources. Nothing is more absurd than the idea of most of our officers that a soldier ought to be a soldier and nothing else. If I am not much mistaken, we are rapidly approaching a period when the general who is not also a statesman, will be of little use in the world; and when statesmen who cannot strike a blow in case of necessity, will be little respected. You need not, therefore, look upon that time as lost which you will have to devote to the study of the art of war, even if you should hereafter change your occupation; these are times when it is good for men to be many-sided."

The orderly re-appeared, announcing that in fifteen minutes the bugle would sound for parade.

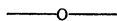
"Very well!"

The man turned on his heel and marched out at the door.

"I almost hate the man," said the major, smiling; "he is,

as it were, an embodiment of inexorable duty, which robs me of my time and kills my mind. You have no idea how many happy hours that man has taken from me, and how many fair thoughts he has stifled in their birth. But we will not wait for his third appearance. Good morning, Baron Hohenstein! To-morrow your commission as ensign will be made out; the day after to-morrow you will report yourself on parade, and the next day you can leave for Berlin, if the lady permits it. If you will call on me before you start, I may be able to give you some hints as to your studies. The mechanical part of the service a man like you learns of course in a few hours; but for that very reason a man like you must not be content with the mechanical part. O heavens! there is my Fate coming again! Good-by! Good-by!"

And Major Degenfeld almost pushed Wolfgang out of the door, as if he wished for none of his acknowledgements.



CHAPTER XI.

WHEN Wolfgang left the major's house he felt like a hypochondriac who has called on a celebrated physician with the certain conviction that he would be condemned as incurable, and who has learned that he is by no means as sick as he fancied, and that, on the contrary, his affection need only be properly treated to restore and strengthen his health. What the major had told him about the unavoidable reform in the army and the close connection between the different pursuits in life, had been quite a revelation to Wolfgang. "The major is right," he said to himself; "nowadays a man must be many-sided if he wishes to satisfy all the demands that the times may make upon him. Strange, that this very natural idea should never have occurred to me before! It might have saved me many a sorrowful hour. But now I can keep it in mind. It will prevent my being disgusted with unmeaning characters like this Willamowski, this Brinkman, and my empty cousins, who have no suspicion in their stupidity of the higher and wider

views of men like Degenfeld. Of course, the old gentleman at Rheinfeld must hear nothing of these heretic notions ; but he need never know what purposes I have in mind while fulfilling his wishes, if he only sees me on Sunday in my uniform, the many-colored coat in which he insists upon beholding his Joseph."

The general had invited the two betrothed and the other members of the family to dine with him on Sunday. Wolfgang was very glad to see the old château and the neglected park again, memorable and dear as they had become to him through so much that had happened to him there. Camilla also had looked forward with pleasure to the trip ; but most of all, the president's wife, who was full of vague plans and projects for the improvement of the place, and hoped that they might mature in presence of the objects that were to be improved. The alderman was positively impatient to pay this visit, for no one had more urgent reasons to wish for another interview with the old gentleman. So far, all the cards that had turned up had been favorable to him. His crime had not been discovered, and there was every probability that it would not be so. The administration of the funds which he had robbed was now in his own hands, and nobody thought of examining the treasury during the great excitement which prevailed in the city on account of the elections. He had not only been reconciled with his relatives, but his position as father of the heir-presumptive of Rheinfeld and the betrothed of the president's beautiful daughter, was one of greater importance than he had ever anticipated. The general had sent no direct answer to his letter in which he informed him "most respectfully" that "his orders had been obeyed," that Wolfgang was engaged to Camilla, and since yesterday on the roster of the ninety-ninth regiment of infantry ; but the prompt invitation to Rheinfeld and a large check on the general's banker in town seemed to prove that he was pleased to see his orders obeyed "so promptly." The hot iron had to be struck at once. A thousand dollars were very acceptable, but ten thousand were ten times better ; and why should the dear old gentleman, who was becoming so liberal in his old age, not supply ten or twenty thousand, if the matter was only presented to him in the proper light.

But on Sunday morning a letter came from Rheinfeld, the contents of which were very discouraging for the sanguine city councillor. The general wrote that he was sick, and could not, and would not, see the company; that the gout was the devil's gift, and the boy might in his name go to Berlin without having presented the little "witch" to his granduncle.

That card was unlucky. The fine opportunity was lost; it was altogether improbable that the old gentleman would change his mind; besides, the day had been fixed for Wolfgang's departure, and, strange enough, Wolfgang insisted upon keeping the appointment punctually.

All wondered at this haste to leave the home of his lady-love in a man who had so recently become engaged; and Wolfgang was not in a position to explain the riddle, at least not without mentioning many things which he did not like to confess to himself. The fact was, that the glorious talisman which he thought he had obtained in his conversation with Major Degenfeld, had proved to be of very little power. The presentation on parade, the report to the officers, the unavoidable intercourse with his "comrades"—young men who were without exception very inferior to him in education—all this had so depressed the mind of the youngest ensign in the ninety-ninth regiment of infantry, that all the heroes of antiquity and the great men of our day—who had been great soldiers and statesmen at once—had disappeared from his horizon, and he saw only men who made their profession a horrible drudgery. Major Degenfeld, it is true, had smiled when Wolfgang had poured out his full heart before him, saying, "Such moments of doubt and trouble would come frequently until practice and reflection should make here also a master of the apprentice," and Wolfgang had anew formed good resolutions to go on like a man, doing his duty unmindful of all others. But he felt, nevertheless, that it would be useful to him to be for some time removed from these surroundings, which reminded him too much of his difficulties, and he himself pressed his departure.

No one was more displeased at this "obstinacy" than his future mother-in-law. She had become passionately fond of Wolfgang in the short time of their acquaintance, discover-

ing every day some new excellency in him. It appeared gradually that Wolfgang represented in form, action, features, and expression, the idealized type of the Hohenstein race ; that his talent for conversation was really astonishing, and his touch on the piano masterly ; that his height matched Camilla's wonderfully ; and that his slender, elegant figure appeared to greatest advantage in uniform. But Wolfgang's greatest merit in the eyes of the president's wife was evidently this, that his engagement to Camilla furnished a pretext for countless parties and excursions, and on this account she would not hear of such a sudden and groundless separation. Camilla of course agreed here, as everywhere, with her mother. She begged and cajoled ; and when begging and cajoling were of no avail, she pouted ; and when pouting had no effect, she broke out in sobs—not in tears, for Camilla never wept ; and when Wolfgang kindly pointed out to her how unwise such conduct was, she became very angry, and declared that if he paid so little respect to her wishes, she also felt disposed to disregard his. She threatened even to join a delightful excursion into the mountains, which Baron Willamowski had arranged for the afternoon, without regard to Wolfgang's departure early on the following morning.

"I have no right to prescribe in any way for you," replied Wolfgang. "If it gives you more pleasure to join your friends in a party to the country than to spend a few hours more with me—why, do it ! You must know best how much you value my company."

"But, my dear," said his future mother-in-law from her easy-chair, "I should think Camilla had a better right to say so than you. How can Camilla's company be so dear to you, if you leave it so suddenly and without sufficient reason?—Hush, Joli !"

"I am sorry, dear aunt, if I have not succeeded in convincing you of the force of my reasons, but ——"

"But then you might at least join us this afternoon !"

"Pardon me, dear Camilla, that is impossible. I have much to do yet, and several calls to make. I wish also to spend a few hours with my mother. You know we cannot be back before half-past ten, and the train leaves to-morrow morning at seven."

"You are obstinate," said Camilla.

"I should return the compliment if I did not think you would certainly stay at home this afternoon to please me."

"You might be mistaken!"

"I shall convince myself of the contrary at three o'clock this afternoon."

"The boat by which we go, leaves at two."

"Then I suppose I must say good-by now, Camilla."

"Good-by."

"Children, children!" cried the mother, rising from her comfortable position, and dropping Joli from her lap on the carpet; "why will you always quarrel? I mean, why can you not agree about such a trifle? You had better yield, dear Wolfgang. A gentleman like you would surely not be so ungallant to a lady!"

"If we were to regulate our intercourse by the laws of gallantry, I fear the ladies would fare very badly. Good-by, madam! Good-by, Camilla!"

Wolfgang bowed and walked slowly to the door, confidently expecting that Camilla would not let him leave her thus. But Camilla did not look up from her embroidery; and the president's wife, who had not caught the meaning of his parting words, said, "At two o'clock then; be sure not to be too late!" Wolfgang paused, and a bitter smile played around his lips; but he said nothing, and with a last bow he left the room.

"You must be very good to him this afternoon," said the mother, quite exhausted from the trying scene, and sinking back in her easy-chair.

"But, mamma, do you really think he will come?" asked Camilla.

"If he will come? *mais cela va sans dire!*"

"*Nous verrons,*" replied Camilla, counting the beads in her embroidery.

Wolfgang came—not at two o'clock, but at three. The servant who received him was exceedingly surprised to see Baron Hohenstein. He knew him well, for it was Jean. "Was the baron not going to join the party? His mistress and the two young ladies had left the house at half-past two, accompanied by Baron Willamowski, Judge Wyse, and Mr. Kettenberg, the painter. The president had not yet returned

from the election, but had promised to join the company by the four-o'clock boat, if the election should be over by that time. Would Baron Hohenstein wait for the president and go with him?"

Wolfgang said "he would see—perhaps he might get through with his business by that time," and went.

His first impulse had been to leave a couple of cards with "*pour dire, adieu*," but had been deterred by the thought that the cunning fellow Jean would at once guess the meaning, and make great fun of Camilla and himself in the lower regions of the house. No yielding! he was determined not to yield, but his heart was saddened. Had it already come to that? So little did Camilla understand him! so frivolous had she become among the men by whom she was surrounded! For Wolfgang threw the blame, of course, principally on her frivolous friends, and especially her indolent, pleasure-loving mother. Wolfgang did not know that the mother was far more frequently led by her strong-willed daughter than the latter by her, nor that it would have cost but a single word from Camilla this morning to persuade the mother to stay at home, and that the word had only not been spoken because Camilla was desirous to see how far she could go with Wolfgang, and to prevent Willamowski, Wyse, and her other admirers, from making satirical allusions to her subjection to any man's rule.

Wolfgang returned home slowly. He deliberated whether he should write to Camilla, and if so, what he should say! Or would it be better to do nothing, and let the facts speak for themselves? He could not decide.

When he reached his room, he found all his things packed, his mother and Ursula having been busily at work. He went down into the garden, reluctant as he was to meet his mother, from whom he had never yet kept anything secret, with a charge against Camilla on his lips. For the simple announcement that Camilla had, after all, joined the excursion party, was accusation enough.

Unexpectedly, Margaret received the news as if she had been prepared for such a result. Of course she did not say so, but she betrayed it in all she said to console her son. Perhaps, if she had looked into the deepest depths of her soul, she might have been shocked to find there a sense

of triumph that Wolfgang had been deserted by her who he thought loved him better than his mother. And this feeling that, for to-day at least, she was once more uppermost in her son's heart, from which a stranger had driven her—that he had come back to her from a world which did not and could not understand him, just as he had come to her as a boy whenever any harm had befallen him—this feeling made her so happy that she became once more proud of being his mother, and poured out the full stream of her affection. She could now chat again as in the good old days; she could laugh again, for Margaret loved to laugh like a child when she was alone. She told Wolfgang of her mysterious interview with old Moss on the day of the betrothal, and asked him if he knew what was meant by the mysterious words, “Hohensteins are Hohensteins.” “What else can it mean,” replied Wolfgang, smiling, “than that the Hohensteins are not Schmitzes, or still more plainly, all the Hohensteins in the world are not fit to loosen the latchet of the shoes of a certain lady of the house of Schmitz, with whom I, the old hack-driver Moss, am desperately in love—as much in love as ever the old magician has been in love with the fair queen who at night wanders up and down amid her roses and lilies, far more splendid in her beauty than all her flowers.”

Margaret laughed heartily; then she became all of a sudden very grave and silent. Wolfgang pressed her to tell him what was the matter, but it was only after some time that she suddenly and hurriedly asked him in a whisper:

“Have you been in River street to say good-by?”

“No,” said Wolfgang, “but I mean to go there this evening, if I can find uncle at home. I should have gone there before, and so also to Doctor Munzer’s; but, to tell the truth, mamma, I hardly think the Schmitz family and Munzer will be particularly pleased with my engagement and my newly-chosen profession. And you know people are very apt to look upon it as a personal insult if we do not arrange our life exactly as they think it ought to be done, without inquiring whether it was at all possible to accept their suggestions.”

“That is very true,” sighed Margaret.

“Still,” continued Wolfgang, “as I said, I should have

gone in spite of the painful nature of such a meeting with Aunt Bella and Uncle Peter. I should have gone at least for my pretty little cousin's sake. Tell me, mamma, why has Ottilia not been here of late? She had promised, I think, to make me well, and then to come every day. Has she taken it amiss that I have gotten well without her assistance? Or is it one of Aunt Bella's countless whims? Or simply my punishment for being engaged to Camilla? That is, after all, the most probable cause!"

Margaret struggled, whether she should state the truth; but offended family pride gained the upper hand, and with the tears streaming from her eyes, she said:

"She has been forbidden to come, Wolfgang!"

"Who has forbidden it?"

"Your father!"

"And why?"

"I do not know—or rather, I know it but too well; because he is ashamed of our relatives; because the relations of your future wife are not to know, or at least not to be reminded of the fact that your mother is a poor printer's daughter."

"And did father say so to Uncle Peter?"

"I had to tell Ottilia myself. She asked me."

Margaret had hardly said these words, when she repented—not from fear of her husband, but from the nobler feeling that it was not proper for a wife and a mother to sow discord between father and son, for whatever reason it might be. She was sure he had not meant to hurt anybody's feelings by his prohibition; she understood perfectly how important the good opinion of his own family must be to him at this moment, when any intimacy with Peter's republican friends might have compromised him grievously with his own party; she even admitted that Peter's brusque manner might have irritated him in many ways—in short, she tried in her heart to find every possible reason for excusing, if not for justifying her husband. Wolfgang listened with a frown and a dark look in his eyes. As last he said:

"Never mind, mamma, it is the old, ever new story; it is the curse that rests upon all men when they cease to be brethren; perhaps because they cannot be brethren! You, dear mother, have suffered enough by this curse, and I am

too entirely your son to claim an exemption for myself. We all have to suffer for the sins of others as well as for our own. What can we do but try to rid ourselves of our own sins, live in pursuit of our ideal, unmindful of others ; make all the sacrifices we can make, without becoming faithless to our own-selves ; and then, when we have reached the point when we are in duty bound to say : So far, and no further ! to stand firm by our convictions, come what may. I have reached that point. Father ought not to go so far. He cannot and must not ask you to tear from your heart and send from your threshold, like unknown strangers, the good people with whom you are bound up by a thousand ties, by the most sacred bonds of common blood, and simply for the sake of his worldly plans. He cannot ask me to leave here without having shaken hands with those from whom I have never received anything but love and kindness during all my life. I shall speak to father about it as soon as he comes home, and he will see that we only ask for what is right and fair. At all events I shall call upon uncle to-night."

Margaret was going to reply, probably to counsel caution and moderation, when the alderman came hastily walking down the garden towards her. Margaret turned pale and cast an imploring look at her son, to which the latter replied with a gentle pressure of the hand and the low words : "Be calm, darling mother !"

The alderman was very much excited ; he kissed his wife's forehead and offered his hand to his son. Then, after the first words of greeting, he began discussing the great event of the day, the election. His news was reliable, for he had just come from the polls. There had been much excitement ; the parties had met passionately, and only after a long time the result had been ascertained.

"And what a result !" cried the alderman. "You will not know, Wolfgang, whether to be glad or to be sorry. In spite of our most strenuous efforts, we have not succeeded in electing the president."

"And Munzer ?" asked Wolfgang.

"Munzer is elected," replied the alderman in a voice which he tried to make indifferent, but which betrayed his inner excitement. "Well, that was to be expected ; he enjoys the confidence of the common people to a very high

degree, in spite of all we have done to uproot it. We had to make this concession, in order to secure at least one of our candidates, of whom we are not quite sure ourselves. They showed very clearly how strong their mistrust of Protestants and government officials is in their hearts. When it was evident that the president could not be elected, they substituted my name in all haste. That might perhaps have been very well, if it had been done in the beginning. I was quite astonished at the large number of votes I received, as it was. But it will be a hard blow for brother. *A propos*, Wolfgang, why did you not join them this afternoon? Brother told me you had all gone to the mountains some time before dinner."

"The others went; I stayed at home to spend a few hours here with mamma, and then to make a few visits, especially at Uncle Peter's house."

Wolfgang had said this in his calmest voice; his mother bent over a flower-bed, and busied herself with some carnations.

"Oh, that reminds me," said the alderman; "I meant to remind you of it some time ago, but forgot it in all this trouble we have had of late. Certainly, your uncle would take it amiss if you were to leave thus, quite *sans façon*. I have of course, these last days, been driven further apart from him than ever before, and that was my reason for begging your mother to reduce her intercourse with River street to what was indispensably necessary; but that does not mean that matters must be carried to an extreme, or that we must forget the ordinary duties of common civility."

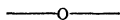
Margaret raised her head from her flowers, and her dark brown eyes were moist, and her gentle voice sounded gentler and sweeter than ever, as she drew up close to her husband's arm, saying: "Come in, dear Arthur! you must be perfectly exhausted! Dinner will be ready, I dare say. And then you must take a glass of wine—of your best hock—that will do you good!"

"And in addition to that, a sweet smile from my beautiful little wife, who, God be thanked, is very much younger yet than my hock! Come, we will be happy and enjoy ourselves!" said the alderman, kissing his wife's hand.

They went into the house. Wolfgang and his mother

shared with the alderman his early dinner, at which he had much to tell about the elections. It was almost dark when Wolfgang started to pay his visits. He had arranged with his mother that she should not expect him home, but retire early, so that she could see him in the morning. The alderman was going to stay at home, and to write up his correspondence, which had been somewhat neglected during the last days. Wolfgang left the house with a lighter heart than he had brought home a few hours before. He had never seen his father and mother so happy in each other. This pleasure made him dread the pain of parting less, though he had looked forward with much apprehension to the moment when he should have to leave his mother. Even his quarrel with Camilla appeared to him less serious. "Camilla will be sorry for her mistake as soon as she comes to see it clearly, and that will be before to-morrow morning. If she once sees that she was wrong, the rest will follow as a matter of course. And as that cannot be forced, we must be patient."

Wolfgang was in the most conciliatory frame of mind when he reached Uncle Peter's house in River street after a long journey through the dusty, noisy streets of the city.



CHAPTER XII.

THE unfortunate event of that evening on which Munzer saved his child from certain death, seemed to have had no more serious consequences than a raging fever which had attacked the boy the same night. It yielded at last to medical treatment, but in its stead appeared a troublesome cough, which left the poor boy no rest by day or by night, and which of course exhausted his mother also, who slept with him in the same room. But her child's illness was probably not the only reason why Clara sat up so often at night in her bed for hours and hours when everybody else was fast asleep, gazing fixedly at the little light of the night-lamp, or burying her head in the pillows to stifle her sobs. The spark of jealousy which Mr. Rupertus had

unknowingly thrown into Clara's heart on that unlucky evening, had in the shortest possible time blazed up into a flame, which was consuming the poor woman's heart and brain. Clara had in her modesty never doubted for years that her husband did not love her as he might have loved another woman, that he had a right to expect more from a wife than she was able to give him with the best will in the world, and that she, therefore, could not make him happy. It was in vain that Munzer had often assured her of the contrary, trying to explain his ill-humor and his discontent on the ground of serious trouble in his business, disgust with political events, and exhaustion in consequence of excessive labor. Munzer told the truth when he said this. Clara knew it; but she also knew that a man, and especially a man of Munzer's energy, is apt to bear even a harder lot easily, if he can rest his weary head on the bosom of his wife after the battle is over, whether he return victorious or defeated. She knew, too, that no man could find this rest unless *he* felt for his wife that true love which cannot exist without profound respect—and alas! this respect he could not feel for her who was in nowise his equal! This she thought, in her modesty, she saw very clearly, and probably others saw it too! She would have given much to make up for her defective education, but poor Clara had little time for study! How often she had envied rich Mrs. Rupertus, whose whole household cares consisted in a few orders issued in the morning to her numerous servants, and who could then devote the whole day to her harmless pursuits, her flowers, her embroidery, her music! Clara had no one to order about but an old servant who performed the coarser domestic work, for Munzer's limited circumstances did not permit him to keep more than one servant. Thus poor Clara had an abundance of work to do in her rooms, her chambers, and her kitchen; and although she managed her needle with a skill and a rapidity which amazed even skillful Aunt Bella, she had ample opportunity for stretching her capacity to the utmost. Then the children would come home from school and claim their share in their mother's love and of her time; they had to tell their little events, to present their little petitions, and then to prepare their lessons under Clara's supervision. Munzer thought more than

once, as he saw his wife manage the house with such quiet regularity, of the story of silent Psyche ; but that this silent Psyche might be wakened up from her sleep by a kiss of love—that he did not believe, simply because he had not succeeded in making her eloquent by his first kiss.

Thus Clara had never learnt to trust herself, and Munzer had never learnt to trust her ; and thus it had come about that Clara was right in thinking that Munzer did not love her as he might love a woman who was perfectly congenial to him, and that Munzer was not happy with her. In evil hours she would even fancy he was downright unhappy by her side.

But until quite recently she had never conceived it possible that her husband could love another woman. How could she? She knew but too well that her husband's whole life was one continuous toil ; that he went from his writing-table at home to his writing-table at the office, from the office to the Republican Club or some public meeting ; and that, when evening drew near, he returned home, weary from writing or talking, and in spite of his weariness often most painfully excited. She knew that in spite of his fiery disposition and his thirst for communication, he rather fled than sought society, and that in their narrow circle of friends and acquaintances there was no woman who could have interested him in the least.

Thus matters had stood till quite lately, till that fatal evening at Mr. Rupertus's villa. "How does your husband like the baroness? He is a connoisseur!" These words had been a fearful revelation to Clara. She did not know Antonia Hohenstein personally, but by sight, and unfortunately also through the reports, which had to say more than was pleasant of the beautiful woman's excessive freedom of manner. At the moment when Mr. Rupertus had mentioned her husband and that woman in the same breath, a thunderbolt had fallen upon her. She felt that Antonia Hohenstein was the kind of beauty that might set her Bernhard's passion on fire. And then Munzer had returned home very late on that evening, quiet and reserved, contrary to his usual habit, and his eye and his forehead had darkened into deep gloom ever since. And while she had been sitting thus, vexing herself in suicidal grief, silent and sad

among her laughing companions, her child's cry for help had suddenly struck her ear ; and when she reached the spot a few minutes later with Mr. Rupertus, she saw her child, apparently dead, in her husband's arms, who immediately afterwards sank down fainting. The excitement of the scene and the care for Charles had prevented her from thinking how her husband happened to be there ; and when she thought of it next morning there was no need for asking any questions, for she knew he could only have come out of Antonia Hohenstein's garden. Antonia Hohenstein's garden, of which Mr. Rupertus had just said, laughing aloud, that it was particularly favorable for the fair lady's gallant adventures—the silent, shady garden, where the nightingales had been singing so gloriously in the thick bosquets, while the bright moonlight cast its charms over tree and bush ! Clara groaned as she slowly thrust the sharp dagger of jealousy deeper and deeper into her heart ; but then she roused herself. No, no !—no cry, no tear for a man who can throw himself away on a notoriously immoral woman ! But she would also not stay another hour in his house, although the very next night had to be spent in the fields, with a hedgerow as the only shelter for herself and her children ! For herself ? Yes ! But for the children ? For her sweet little Ella ; for her poor Charlie, who lay shaken with chills in his bed, and begged his dear mamma every moment to give him some water, ah ! only a drop of cool water !

Clara must stay where she was, doing her duty faithfully as before, without thinking of herself, or at least without allowing herself to be lured away from her path of duty for a moment, by all the thoughts of her wrong. The evil hour when she should have to part from him whom she had loved better than her own life, whom she still loved above all things—that hour would come she knew, but it had not yet come. Although the next days brought more and more evidence that she would have to leave him soon perhaps, she still felt that for the present she had nothing to do but to be more attentive than ever, and to try, by great gentleness and patience, to drive away the demons whose black wings were overshadowing her husband's brow, and darkening the bright eye of his mind. She saw what efforts he made to do his accustomed work, but also how hard he found it, how

weak his once indefatigable strength had become. Munzer had not yet reached the goal at which he had been aiming for so long a time ; he must reach it for his own sake, and for that of his party. He must not succumb in the fierce struggle of the election ; and the nearer the moment of the conflict came, the greater were the efforts made by the adversaries, and the more difficult it became to keep the partially broken party together. A terrible burden weighed on Munzer's soul ; his pale forehead, his hollow eyes, his sunken cheeks, even the lower and hoarser tone of his voice, testified to its weight. Could she, who had lived only for him since the day on which she first saw him, leave him now ? Could she make the burden still heavier ? For she felt in her heart that he would not part from her without a struggle and without suffering ; an inner voice told her : " He loves you yet in spite of all ; he loves you at least enough to suffer for you, when you show him the wounds by which you are bleeding to death."

How she should live after that, Clara did not know. She hardly thought of the future. She only knew she could not continue to live as she now did.

During the first days, the poor woman had sought comfort in the thought that she might be mistaken, that the whole was nothing but a bad dream, an idle creation of her fancy. But she was to be robbed even of this comfort.

On the third day, just as Bernhard had left the house to go to the office, a letter came, evidently written in a disguised handwriting. The letter was signed, " a man of honor." The man of honor considered it his duty to inform Mrs. Munzer of the relations which had now existed for some time between her husband and the Baroness Antonia Hohenstein, especially as the whole town was full of the story. At the same time, the man of honor seemed to have been bent upon hurting the poor lady's feelings as deeply as he could, for he mentioned a whole series of gallant adventures drawn from Antonia's former experience, and assured her finally, " that he had for the present mentioned only what could be mentioned, but that shortly he would treat her to a few details of special interest."

The president, in his wrath at Antonia's positive refusal to lend him her aid in a political intrigue against Munzer,

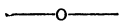
had dictated this letter to his servant Jean ; but if he had hoped to provoke an open rupture between Munzer and his wife, and thus to destroy the former morally in the eyes of the public, he had miscalculated the effect.

Clara had burned the letter with trembling hand, even before she had read it to the end. Her house seemed to be defiled as long as such a document was within its walls ; the breath of the slanderers which infected the pure air around her, must be blown away with the ashes of the letter. Yes, the slanderer ! Bernhard Munzer could never sink so low as to be criticized by a man like the writer of that letter ! Whoever might have written the anonymous slander, it could not possibly have been a friend of Bernhard's ; and the wife who bore his name, the mother of his children, could under no circumstances whatever enter into an alliance with Munzer's enemies.

And Clara locked up the dread secret in her innermost heart, and pressed her face deep into the pillows, that even by the faint glimmer of the night-lamp the silent night might not see her tears. Her greatest fear now was that Munzer's enemies might attack him next directly with their poisoned arrows, and yet all depended upon the intended victim suspecting nothing of the danger with which he was threatened. But it seemed that the enemies lacked courage. At least Clara could not perceive any change in her husband's manner which would have betrayed unusual excitement. On the contrary, he was sombre and gloomy, as he had always been of late, but at the same time milder and more sympathizing than ever. Not a bitter word passed his lips, such as he formerly often uttered when he felt the embarrassments of his position more oppressively than usual. He occupied himself at home a good deal with Ella. When he came home, his first word was an inquiry after the little patient's condition ; and when he left home in the morning or after dinner to go to his office, his last word was to encourage Clara to keep up, to be cheerful, and above all not to make herself sick.

The days came and the days went, and the term which Clara had appointed herself for the decision of her fate drew nearer. If Munzer was elected—and Clara did not doubt that he would be elected—she would speak to him ; what

might happen next, Clara knew not. The time beyond that day seemed to her as dark as the grave.



CHAPTER XIII.

AND as dark seemed life to Munzer now. The weird brightness which his passion for Antonia had momentarily cast upon the world, had faded away quickly. He had never doubted for a moment that this passion was wrong. Nor had he thought that that scene in Antonia's splendid supper-room could ever be repeated, and that the dream of a mad night could continue far into the reality of bright day. And yet all this had happened—contrary to his will, it is true, but nevertheless it was so. The scene had been repeated, although without the *naïve* freshness of that first, almost miraculous meeting. He had felt Antonia's lips on his own lips once more, but that second kiss had resembled the first only as sleep resembles death.

And many a time Munzer felt as if his soul had parted from him, and he was wandering, a dead man, among the living. There was but a single point amid all this confused, ever changing, ever deceitful world of error, in which he lived as in a dream, which he saw clear and unchanging: the conviction that he must do his duty under all circumstances. He had given up Antonia a second time—forever, as he thought—and with Antonia every hope to see his wishes for something better, something higher than what he now had ever realized in this life. He threw himself, with all the strength that he could still command, into the high waves of the political current; but he had never yet worked and labored so entirely without any personal ambition, without cheerfulness, nay even without hope of a favorable result for the common welfare—and yet he had developed almost marvellous energy and unbounded devotion to his cause. He succeeded thus, at least, in escaping from himself. The more he made public affairs his own private concern, the more he lost all interest in what concerned him as an indi-

vidual. He had never made an attempt to approach Antonia again ; he left her with silent resignation to her fate ; she might settle her account with fate as he settled his. And the same frigid indifference he felt for his wife and his children. At first, the fact that he had struggled with death itself for his child at the very moment when he had forgotten himself and all his duties in life in the admiration of a beautiful woman, had made a deep impression upon his mind ; but his scepticism had soon found out that it was all the effect of chance, which plays with our virtues and our vices unconcerned for the consequences that may result. And yet Clara was right when she thought her husband was milder now and more sympathizing. But she was also right, when this unusual gentleness troubled her more than his former inequality of temper. She knew her husband too well not to be aware that to passionate characters like his, constant gentleness is almost impossible ; and what would have appeared to a woman of less delicacy of feeling and dimmer vision the morning dawn of a fairer future, was to her but the last glimmer of the setting sun of her earthly happiness.

And now she was counting by the beating of her heart the minutes that would yet elapse before the last ray of light should vanish. The election day had come ; it was past noon, and Bernhard might come home any moment. She had never in her life looked forward to his return with such feelings ; and while she was trying to school her heart and to prepare herself for her last sad interview with her husband, her thoughts were continually escaping from the horror of the present moment and gliding back to those beautiful days of her first love, when her heart beat high and shouted for joy as she heard the step of her beloved approach the threshold.

Munzer had no suspicion of what was going on in his wife's heart, much less of the dread resolve that had slowly ripened there. As he tried to bury all recollection of his intimacy with Antonia in his own mind, he thought that it was to others also a profound secret, for Antonia's allusions to the president's expectations from her influence over him, had never appeared to him any thing more than frivolous fancies of her idle brain. Munzer's weakness had

ever been to underrate the strength of the adversaries he despised. He had done so in this case also. Nevertheless, the author of Clara's anonymous letter had told the truth when he stated that Munzer's relations to Antonia were the common talk of town. They were largely discussed in the higher circles ; and what was much worse for Munzer, and might have been dangerous to him in his political aspirations even in the lower classes and the low drinking houses, where suspicious-looking electors, between the enjoyment of sour beer and bad tobacco, weighed the merits and the foibles of the respective representatives with great zeal and with still greater turbulence. No one could tell how the report had originated, that Munzer was a bad father and a faithless husband, who laughed at his openly-professed republican principles in the arms of rich and titled mistresses. This only was certain, that a pale, thin young man, who had openly denounced Doctor Munzer in a popular inn, had been thoroughly thrashed by a fanatic admirer of Munzer and of the Red Republic—the locksmith, Christopher Unkel. The young man had been kicked out of the house, to the great delight of the assembled crowds, and from that evening Munzer's popularity had risen from a very low ebb almost to its former height.

Even to the rooms in Peter Schmitz's back building these evil reports had found their way, and from thence they had naturally penetrated gradually through the printers' room into the office, and thus to the sitting-rooms in the front part of the building. Peter Schmitz declared at once, most energetically, that "the whole was an infamous lie, coined by Munzer's enemies, and that they must not come and tell him such nonsense." But Aunt Bella was not at all of his opinion. Long before the world began to busy itself with Doctor Munzer's domestic affairs, she had seen and heard enough that "she did not like," and had more than once told her most intimate friends, "you will see that ends badly." Of course, Aunt Bella now chimed in with the world, and considered that the time had come when something ought to be done. Her first intention had been to have a serious conversation with Munzer himself. But she gave up this idea as less expedient—not as the more dangerous, for the bold old lady knew no danger—and proposed to enlighten

Clara as to her situation with great precaution, but also with perfect candor. But this plan also seemed to her objectionable on account of Clara's extreme sensitiveness, and at last she resolved to entrust the mission to Doctor Holm, to whom she confided all her secrets. Holm had at first declined the delicate mission very decidedly, not because he doubted for a moment that the common report was true, at least in its main features, but because he doubted the usefulness of such attempts to interfere, and thought it wiser, in such matters, to let everybody attend to his own affairs.

It was the afternoon of the day of election. Holm was alone in the office. Munzer was still at a meeting, and sent from time to time bulletins home about the state of the poll. Holm was in a melancholy humor, and every time when he began to hum the champagne song from Don Giovanni, "Give me, oh boy, the sparkling cup," he broke down after the first bars. The editorial leader-*orum*, as he called it, had given him more trouble than usual; and the points with which he generally abounded, would not come to-day. Holm did not know what it was that "put him out so much." The situation in general had undergone no change. That the People's Journal would cease to appear by the first of July, or pass into other hands, Holm had been told long ago, though he had never yet found out to his satisfaction which of the two evils was likely to be the greater. For Holm knew the probable new owner and did not trust him, although he had sworn at one of the first interviews about the sale of the paper, that he would in no wise change its radical tendencies, and leave the editor perfectly free to continue it in the spirit that had made it so famous.

Nor had Munzer's relations to his wife, which were a source of great trouble to his kind heart, in any way changed for the worse; and poor Cajus had actually improved very much during the last days. He could not see anywhere a good reason for being so very melancholy, and yet Holm was so much out of humor that he gave up the completion of his leader-*orum* as "a bad job," and took up instead the accumulated letters, most of which had not yet been opened, in order to fill up the blank space with some interesting facts drawn from his correspondence.

Holm had read three voluminous letters with frowning

forehead and arched eye-brows, without having an idea of what he had been reading, and was just about to fold up a fourth letter after a slight glance at the contents, when he suddenly awoke as from a dream, looked once more at the signature and then at the direction, and finally folded it up carefully, now only doing what in his absent-mindedness he had neglected to do before. He read the address, which was not, as on all the other letters: "Editor People's Journal," but "Doctor Bernhard Munzer—*private*." It was evidently not a newspaper correspondent who had written it.

Doctor Holm's forehead was grimly furrowed as he made this strange discovery, and his eye-brows rose higher and higher on his forehead, till they looked like two dark storm-clouds on a red evening sky.

"True then!" he said to himself; "love, resignation, and all the other stuff—just as you read it in novels; and poor people in real life break their hearts over it! Well, I only wish the——"

And Doctor Holm struck the table with his hand so that the foreman in the printing office looked in through the little window and asked if the doctor had called?

"No!" cried Doctor Holm; and then he murmured: "Who on earth can work with such things going on around him? I cannot. A man must be without a heart to take such things with indifference. But I'll have a talk with the boy; I'll show him where he is; I'll—first write my *leader-orum*; I am now in the humor for it."

And Doctor Holm dipped his pen in the inkstand and wrote in the most abominable hieroglyphics that ever drove printer to despair, an article distinguished by its grand, lofty style and by the noble indignation it breathed against "the worst enemies of Liberty," who wanted to govern without being able to govern themselves, and who did not consider that, in a really free commonwealth, moral greatness was a condition of political greatness. He inveighed against the conspirators who were willing to overthrow tyrants, but not to establish a republic against men like Alcibiades, who had been justly ostracized in days of old because their brilliant talents had been dangerous gifts for their fellow-citizens.

Doctor Holm had just gone to the window to read over

his article once more, when he heard Munzer's step on the gallery outside.

A moment later Munzer entered the room.

He threw his slouched hat on the table and himself into a chair. He looked as if he were utterly exhausted. He poured a glass of water into a tumbler and drank it eagerly. Then he turned to Holm, saying :

"Well Holm ! the prelude is over ; the actors are on the stage ; the comedy can begin. I hope I can say my part without blundering !"

"I wish, Munzer, you had used a different figure of speech to tell me of your election. I congratulate you, however, heartily," said Holm, very seriously. "You know I do not like to see life treated like a piece performed on the stage."

"And is it anything else," asked Munzer, with a gloomy voice. "A man of humor as you are, ought to know."

"There is room for the humorous in life," replied Holm, "and I am the last man to deny it ; but that room is limited ; and when in King Lear, Fate begins its bloody work, the foot slips away and reappears no more."

"What a preacher of morality you are to-day !" replied Munzer. "I hope your editorial is not cut after the same pattern !"

"Perhaps it is," said Holm ; "if you choose, I will read it to you."

"If you think it desirable !" replied Munzer, leaning back in his chair.

Munzer gave several signs of impatience while Holm was reading ; and hardly had the last word been uttered, when he exclaimed, "And you call that a leading editorial, dear Holm, at this time when the result of the election is the only natural and interesting topic ! And what can this apology for good men who are bad musicians do for us—for us who can count the few available men whom we have on our fingers, and who ought to be very glad to welcome any man without examining first how far he is strictly moral or not !"

"Formerly you used to think differently !"

"That may be ! Perhaps I begin to feel the future statesman within me ! But seriously, Holm, I have of late become more and more convinced that all great political

questions depend far more upon might than upon sentiment. I am determined to carry out our ideas, even to the extreme, by all the means I may have at my disposal; not because I underrate or ignore the dangers in our path, but because our rose-water policy leads to nothing, and we shall, sooner or later, be compelled to use force. We might, I think, use it just as well now, before our strength is wasted by long and useless negotiations."

"Then I fear you will not desire to see my article in the paper, as it is directly opposed to that policy."

"Candidly: No, Holm!"

"Well then, it may stay away," said Holm, folding up the sheets on which it had been written. "If I cannot convince you at whom the article was principally aimed, it is of course of no value in my eyes."

"Aimed at me particularly!" said Munzer, with an ironical smile. "Well, that is not so bad! I a conspirator! I an Alcibiades? Pardon me, dear Holm, but I confess I do not comprehend you."

"Perhaps you will comprehend me," said Holm, "if I speak to you not as a politician, but as a friend. At the risk of losing your friendship, I must tell you that it has caused me great grief to see you wage such a war of annihilation against yourself, to see how day after day your passions obtain a stronger hold on your mind, until you are in a fair way to ruin yourself and the happiness of your family forever. You have changed sadly during the last weeks; you would be shocked if you could see yourself for once with the eyes of another person. Such changes without do not take place without corresponding changes within. I cannot think that the state of politics can be the cause of this, because I know, from of old, that you are not an optimist in such matters. It must be something else; and whatever it may be, concerns you of course, first and foremost; but in spite of that, you cannot prevent the secret from becoming known to both your friends and your enemies, although under very different aspects. Unfortunately, I have to tell you that this secret has ceased to be one as far as the great public is concerned. You will bear me witness that I am not a lover of gossip, nor a spy, and yet I have heard, I have even seen more of the relations in which you stand to a certain great lady than

I like to know. Among the letters of to-day which I opened under the impression that all of them were business letters, there is one from the lady with whose name report has coupled yours now for some time."

While Holm spoke these words, Munzer had become very pale and quiet, so that Holm began to pity the patient whom he had undertaken to heal. He hastened, therefore, to add:

"Do not take the matter more tragically than it deserves, dear Munzer. There are few things on earth so bad that they cannot be set right again, if we have the firm will to do so."

Munzer made a declining gesture with his hand.

"Where is the letter?" he said.

"Here, I have of course read only a few lines."

"All right, Holm."

Munzer put the letter into his pocket without looking at it, rose and seized his hat.

"I suppose you can finish the paper without me?"

"Certainly, but you ought not to leave so; you are too excited."

"I am not excited, I am as calm as the grave."

"You ought to stay all the more."

"I cannot stay; farewell!"

"Munzer, for God's sake!" cried Holm, starting up and putting himself in his friend's way; "what do you mean to do? I will not let you go till you promise not to do anything violent."

"Do you think I am a child!" replied Munzer, smiling bitterly; "here is my hand."

"Munzer," said Holm, deeply moved; "think of your wife and children."

"I am thinking of them," replied Munzer. "Farewell."

He went. Holm sat down at the writing-table, and took up his correspondence, almost groaning. "To the devil with all phantoms," he cried, and dipped his pen with great energy into the inkstand.

CHAPTER XIV.

"**B**ERNHARD!"

Clara's trembling lips did not utter the word, and yet it seemed to her as if the whole quiet room had resounded with it. She was going to rise from her seat by her workstand in the window; but she had not the strength to do it. She pressed her hand upon her beating heart and stared at the door. A moment later, her husband was standing before her.

"Clara!"

The first impulse of his young wife was to throw herself on her husband's bosom and to tell him all—no, to say nothing, only to feel once more, perhaps the last time in her life, as his wife. But a nobler impulse, offended pride, kept her from doing it. She bent her head over her work and whispered:

"Is it you already?"

"Already? That sounds as if you had not expected me yet, or not expected me at all."

Munzer said this without any bitterness. He was still standing before Clara, his arms crossed on his breast, as if he wished to prevent himself from extending a hand to her whose heart could no longer be his.

Clara looked up at him. One glance at his pale, care-worn face, sufficed to destroy all the plans she had formed so calmly and thoughtfully. She covered her face with her hands and broke out in a flood of tears.

Her weeping gave Munzer his strength back again. He felt it was his duty to speak and to act. He sat down near the window opposite to Clara, and said, calmly and sadly:

"Can you listen to me, Clara; will you?"

Clara made no reply, but a slight inclination of her head and a suppressed sob said yes.

"I will tell you a story, Clara—a short story, and you must think the two persons of whom it treats are not we, but two persons of our acquaintance of whom we are fond, and whose fate is placed in our hand. It is the story of a

man who was poor, unhappy, and made gloomy by his hard lot and his passionate heart. He married a girl who also had never known the brighter side of life, and to whom life was therefore as little attractive as to the man. They lived together for years ; they shared with each other all they had to share—of joy little, of sorrow much. The red rose of love, which only blooms in the sunshine of happiness, could not flourish in their garden. She could at no moment get rid of the idea that her husband was unhappy with her because she prevented him from fully developing all his powers ; he, on his part, did nothing, or at least did not enough, to relieve his wife of this burden which weighed so heavily on her heart and on her mind. He tried at first to make merry over her troubles, or to teach her how to bear it like a philosopher ; but he became impatient when he did not succeed at once, and forgot that his vehemence and his gloom contradicted his kisses and his words. Thus, instead of supporting each other, as they had once vowed and no doubt intended to do, they only made life harder to each other. Even their children were not able to counteract the curse that rested upon them. They could not be happy in their children as they ought to have been, because each one became a new source of care and anxiety. He and the children could not harmonize with each other ; he had seldom time to occupy himself with them ; and if he now and then took them on his knees, they glanced shyly up at the gloomy man, and he felt more and more painfully what a stranger he was in his own house.

“Nevertheless, the two loved each other ; but as both were proud, they never told each other so ; and as they did not seem to love each other, and did nothing to break the evil charm, the appearance soon became reality, and half a love was for both of them no love.

“Still, neither of them had yet thought that infidelity, in the ordinary sense of the word, could ever step in between them.

“Then it happened that the man became acquainted with a woman, by a chance such as could not be more accidental—a woman whose uncommon beauty inflamed his imagination all the more, as his mind when he first saw her was in the very depth of despair and disgust. In the intoxication of an

overwrought, feverish enthusiasm, this woman appeared to him as the ideal of his dreams, and he loved her as in a dream we worship an apparition of more than earthly splendor. But he had not been schooled in vain in that bitter philosophy which teaches self-denial on every page. He tore himself away from that dream, not without a struggle, not without pain, but yet so that he remained victorious in the terrible struggle. Then he saw the woman once more to tell her what she had already told herself. Since that time they have not met again, those two whom blind Chance had brought together, and whom wakeful Reason had parted again. She wrote a letter to him, which he received a few minutes ago, which he has not read, and which he will not read, for a curtain has fallen, for him, over those scenes of his life, and he will never raise it again.

"Then this man came to the mother of his children and told her everything; and, Clara, if you were the intimate friend of this mother, if you had to think and to decide for her, what would you advise her to reply to her husband?"

Clara ceased weeping after her husband's first words; and as she now, when he had ended, raised her face to him, there lay on it calmness and clearness, which terrified Munzer. And the same calmness and clearness was in her voice, as she said:

"I thank you, Bernhard, that you have spoken first, and that you have asked me to say what I should have said to you, unasked, but with a much heavier heart. You mean it well, Bernhard, I do not doubt that. I can hardly tell you how fully I am convinced of it; but for that very reason I cannot permit your kindness to be any longer the cause of your unhappiness. You love me, you say, and I believe you. You love the children, you say, and I believe that also. But this love is not that which you could give another woman, nor that which I require. As you say, half a love is no love. I have felt this painfully, oh how painfully, ever since I have been your wife. Hence I have wished a hundred and a thousand times to tell you so, and to beseech you to free yourself and me of this burden. I never had the courage to do it. Now I have it. I hardly know why and whence, but it may be because I am perfectly certain that we cannot go on living as we now do. What would be the

result? We would be still more careful not to let each other see how unhappy we are ; but that would not lessen our burden ; on the contrary, it would only be all the heavier, because of the secrecy. Then it occurred to me, Bernhard—but you must listen calmly and patiently—that possibly I see more clearly in this matter than you do. Let us part for a time, not forever, for an inner voice tells me it cannot and shall not be forever. The opportunity is most favorable. When you sent me, an hour ago, the news of your election, I first cried to my heart's content, and then I said, 'It is best so.' You will go to Berlin in a few days ; I might remain here with the children, but I cannot get well in these rooms ; and besides, who knows how long you may be kept there, and how you may come back? I think it best, therefore, you should send me and the children to my old uncle. No one will wonder, for is it not perfectly natural that I should avail myself of your absence to make the journey? Besides, Dr. Brand says Charlie ought to have some change of air. There we can stay as long as you choose. The children shall be well taken care of. I will teach Ella myself ; Charlie will study Latin and the other things with uncle, who, you know, is a great scholar and fond of teaching. What do you say, Bernhard?"

"That you are right, perfectly right."

Munzer rose and walked up and down in the little room. It had grown dark in the meantime, and Clara was no longer able to see the expression in his face. But the tone in which he had spoken was so peculiar, that she rose hastily, and placing her hand on his arm, said :

"Bernhard, do you believe in my love?"

"Oh, certainly," replied Munzer, in the same subdued, uncomfortable tone. "In that half love which is no love."

Clara took her hand from his arm. She knew she might keep back her husband if she chose, but her resolution was formed.

"Then you consent?"

"Certainly."

"And you permit me to leave to-morrow?"

"All the more readily as I think of leaving myself. I believe I can be more useful now in Berlin than here."

"Will you have your supper now?"

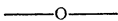
"Thank you, no! I must go out again."

"Then good-by, Bernhard. The children want me."

"Good-by!"

Munzer was near the door. He hesitated before opening it. In Clara's bosom a wild cry: Bernhard! Bernhard! was struggling for utterance. But not a sound escaped her lips—and the door closed after the dark, beloved form!

Clara stood for a moment in the dimly-lighted room, pressing her hands to her burning temples, and then she went slowly to the chamber where her children were.



CHAPTER XV.

IT was already quite dark in the sitting-room of the house in River street, so that one had to come up close to the great bay-window, in which two ladies were sitting, to recognize in them Aunt Bella and Ottilia; while the figure of Uncle Peter, who was walking up and down in the further part of the deep room, was hardly visible against the dark tapestry. The brother and sister had just had a long conversation on family matters, which had at last become so painful to Peter that he tried to break it off with the words: "Very well! Then we must begin once more from the beginning; that is all!"

But Aunt Bella was not so easily silenced, especially in the beautiful twilight, when one could talk so comfortably, and she replied with great animation:

"Yes, that is all, but not for you! I know what that *all* means for you: trouble and care and sleepless nights without end."

"Then leave at least your Jeremiads till we are alone," replied Peter, angrily; "why must the poor child hear all this?"

"Ottilia is old enough to see life as it is," said Aunt Bella; "are you not, Ottilia?"

"Perhaps so," replied Ottilia, "but pardon me, my dear aunt, I really do not see how uncle could act otherwise."

"Do you?" said Peter, eagerly. "You are a good girl! But let us hear what you have to say: why do you think I cannot act otherwise?"

"Because you cannot change the character of the paper without being inconsistent with your principles, and that I think is the worst thing a man can do."

"Girl!" said Uncle Peter, pausing before her, "you are my flesh and blood!"

Uncle Peter had said these words with such unusual mildness and cordiality, that Ottilia left her place in the window, and embraced him. Uncle Peter held her fast, and placing his arm around her slender waist he continued his walk.

"Of course!" said Aunt Bella. "I have water in my veins; I am not flesh and blood; I came from the moon," and as she said so she looked at the golden disc of the moon, which was just rising above the roofs of the adjoining houses.

Ottilia made a motion towards the window, but Peter held her back.

"I know you better, Bella," he said. "I know that there is no better heart beating than yours; but of politics you know simply nothing at all."

"And do not wish to understand anything," cried Aunt Bella, very eagerly. "God preserve me! I never saw yet any good coming from politics, but much that was bad. If you cannot find the shadow of a reason for some extraordinary notion of yours, then it is politics; that must serve as a pretext for committing such and such a folly. Because it is against his republican conscience to let others help him, that man Cajus is starving in his garret with his broken arm; because he must needs play a part in politics, Doctor Munzer wastes his money on wretches, and sees his neighbor in Tom, Dick, and Harry, rather than in his wife and children. As a political character, you must give up your paper, on which your whole heart hangs, and prepare for yourself a future that makes you shudder. And what right have you to blame others who do not think as you do, and who might just as well plead politics as an excuse for their sins. You blame the aristocrats; the alderman blames the republicans. Your principle is, Like tends to like; the alderman says the same; why then should he not forbid us his house? why

should not Wolfgang enter the army and marry Camilla? What is right for one, is right for another."

To hear the alderman excused or even praised by Aunt Bella, was such a very extraordinary event that Peter in his first surprise did not know what to say. Ottilia could only hear him breath hard and fast; she feared an outburst of his violent temper, and said promptly in a low tone: "Don't be angry with aunt, dear uncle; she means it well, you know."

But Ottilia had not said this so low that Aunt Bella's acute ear had not heard it. "I can defend myself, child," she said bitterly. "I need no advocate."

"What!" said Uncle Peter, "you need no advocate? Let me speak, child, I am not angry; I should have no end of trouble if I were to be angry at such things. But I tell you this, Bella: if you ever again speak favorably of a man who has sinned so grievously against me, who has cheated me out of the happiness of my life, and finally crowned his work by turning this child here—my child—out of his house, you shall——"

Peter Schmitz struck his forehead and murmured the old warning in his beard, which had so often led him safely through much trouble: "Be calm, Peter, be calm!"

"Well, what shall I suffer?" asked Aunt Bella, with a voice which was intended for irony, but which only betrayed the approach of tears. "What is so bad that it would be good enough for Aunt Bella? Let us hear it. Nothing, I promise you, will be a surprise to me!"

"Good-by, Ottilia!" said Peter Schmitz, pressing the hand of his niece so hard that she nearly cried with pain, and hastening towards the door.

Before he reached there, however, it was opened from the outside, and a tall man entered the dark room.

"Who is that?" cried Peter.

"I! Wolfgang! I heard you talking, and so I came in. I am glad to find you here, uncle; I came to say good-by to you."

"As I have said long since to you and your father," cried Peter Schmitz, running out of the room, without taking Wolfgang's proffered hand, and slamming the door so violently that the sound shook the whole house like a clap of thunder.

Wolfgang was so amazed at this reception, which far exceeded in unkindness his worst apprehensions, that he did not at first know what to do. Then he recollected that Uncle Peter had indeed reason to consider himself insulted, and that it was the son's duty to make amends for the father's wrong-doing. He walked up, therefore, to the bay-window, which was now completely flooded with the soft light of the moon, and said:

"You will not condemn me unheard, Aunt Bella, and you Cousin Ottilia?"

"You might be mistaken there," replied Aunt Bella, in whose veins the Schmitz blood began to boil, excited as it was already from the discussion with her brother. "And what is there to hear? I should think the facts were clear enough. Is that the reward for all the love we have bestowed upon you? When did you ever come here, as a boy, that Aunt Bella had not an apple or a story for you, and Uncle Peter a picture-book or a flag or a sheet full of golden soldiers? When did you ever come here, as a grown man, that we did not receive you with open arms, and my poor brother, who never drinks wine himself, did not bring his best bottle from the cellar? When did you ever hear anything but kind words from him or from me, and you know we always meant what we said? And what has been our reward? I do not mean to say a word of myself, for that is not worth mentioning; but of my poor brother, one hair of whose head is worth more than all of you together! You have sinned against him grievously; you have embittered his whole life; you have made him so savage that he turns now against his own flesh and blood, and pours his wrath out upon me because I take your part! But go on in this way and see where it will lead to! Despise your relations in River street and throw yourself into the arms of your noble kinsfolk! Stalk about in your king's livery! Like Joseph in his many-colored coat, you will reach the pit soon enough, for pride goes before a fall! Marry your sweet baroness; I do not care! But do not expect, Wolfgang, that your Aunt Bella will stand up for you as she used to do. Do not ask me to mention you in my prayers morning and night, as I have done ever since I held you over the baptismal font. I do not wish you any harm, but I cannot pray for you, Wolfgang!"

Aunt Bella had left her seat in the window to come close up to Wolfgang, for she liked to look her friends in the face. As Wolfgang remained silent, and made no effort even to defend himself, Aunt Bella suddenly felt utterly bewildered, uncertain whether such obstinacy deserved still greater condemnation, or whether she had perhaps done the poor boy grievous wrong, and ought to fall upon his neck, asking his pardon. As she could not on the spur of the moment decide which was the most expedient proceeding, she burst in the meanwhile into tears, rushed into the adjoining room, closing the door rather violently, turned the key and pushed the bolt—as a sign that for the present she wished to have nothing to do with this wicked, good-for-nothing world.

Wolfgang had not stirred during the storm which had so unexpectedly broke upon him. His eyes had been steadily fixed upon Ottilia's slender form, which the moonlight inundated with soft radiance, as if he cared only for her judgment, whether she would condemn him like the others. He actually expected her to cut his aunt short and to speak in his defence. But Ottilia was silent, even now, and Wolfgang, bitterly disappointed, turned round to retrace his steps and to leave, without a complaint or a reproach, the house in which he had been so inhospitably treated. Just then he heard the rustling of a lady's dress behind him; a warm hand touched his lightly, and a melodious voice said:

"Cousin, do not leave us thus! Do not leave us without saying that you forgive uncle and aunt!"

Wolfgang looked at the sweet, tearful face, and at the sight all the bitterness in his heart disappeared as if by magic.

"Thanks, Ottilia," he said, and his fingers grasped the little hand which had instinctively plead for peace. "You look to me to-day, as you did the other evening at my mother's, like an angel of peace and comfort. Farewell!"

"I will show you the way out," said Ottilia. "It is so dark on the gallery, and you have not been here for many years."

Wolfgang could have found his way out of the house very well, even in the dark; but he made no attempt to send back Ottilia. Thus they went, hand in hand, along the creaking gallery and down the narrow, steep staircase.

In the meantime Ottilia said:

"Is it true, Wolfgang, that you are to be an officer?"

"Yes!"

"And that you are—engaged?"

"Yes!"

"And that you are going to leave here?"

"Yes—to-morrow morning—for six months. Ah! Now you give me up like the others, don't you?"

"No, cousin; you look too good and kind for that. You cannot be acting badly; I only feel sorry for your mother! She will miss you sadly."

"Will you come and see her, Ottilia, if I promise you that my father himself will beg you to come as often as you can?"

"That is not necessary. If I thought I could be of any use to her—I am very fond of your mother."

"And she is very fond of you, and so am I, Ottilia—very fond!"

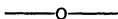
Wolfgang was standing at the foot of the steps; Ottilia on the last step. Through the wide-open front door a broad beam of moonlight streamed into the house, but at the place where they stood it was so dark that Wolfgang could scarcely see the outline of Ottilia's figure. He bent over towards her; the warm breath of her lips touched his cheeks.

"Farewell, Ottilia!"

"Farewell, dear Wolfgang! Farewell!"

They held each other embraced, and their lips met.

And quickly as they had found each other, they also parted. Ottilia's light form glided up the steps; Wolfgang stepped through the front door into the street flooded with soft moonlight.



CHAPTER XVI.

HE wandered slowly down the street, lost in thought. In his soul, as in the street, it was neither quite light nor quite dark—a magic twilight, which made everything he had experienced during the last hours appear in

new, strange forms and proportions; even the old familiar houses looked strange to him. He still heard the bitter words with which he had been received by his Uncle Peter and Aunt Bella, but only like discords which a great master harmoniously blends into a higher accord—a sweet girlish voice, which sounds to him from the dark distance like angel's song, and enters his ears and his heart alike—a soft, girlish hand, which leads him down the narrow staircase—two dewy lips which touch his in cordial greeting: Farewell, dear Wolfgang! farewell!

And then Wolfgang thought of the other farewell which he had said to-day—in the bright glare of daylight, in a magnificent room—to a marvellously beautiful lady, who did not raise her eyes from her work as he went to the door, his heart full of grief and wrath; and then he thought that this young lady was she whom he loved and meant to have for his wife, in order to share with her his griefs and his joys, and never to part again till death should part them. And while he thus walked through the streets, unnoticed by all these people who passed him or stood chatting at their doors, she was sitting on the deck of the steamboat, surrounded by her admirers, smiling and turning now to one and now to the other! How distinctly he saw it all! How distinctly he heard it all!—Aurelia's bold laugh, Willamowski's affected lisp, his aunt's slow, phlegmatic speech—and through all the twaddle and the laughter a sweet, soft voice said, Farewell, dear Wolfgang! farewell!

It was a strange conflict in his heart—the very acme of that conflict which passed through his whole life, and which had recently assumed a more and more definite form, till it appeared in the shape of two beautiful girls, one of whom was his betrothed, and yet had let him go to-day as one dismisses an indifferent visitor; while the other, whom he saw to-day for the second time in his life, had parted with him with a kiss and—Farewell, dear Wolfgang! farewell!

Wolfgang had intended to call also upon Munzer, and thus he had almost instinctively walked towards that part of the town in which the latter lived. As he followed one of the more lonely streets which were here frequently lined with gardens, he saw on the other side a man whose size and carriage reminded him of Munzer. He crossed, therefore, to that side;

but at the same moment the man disappeared through the gate of one of those gardens which Chinese lanterns and gay flags marked as a public resort. Wolfgang was on the point of turning back. He knew that Munzer, from principle, never frequented such places. And yet the man had looked so much like Munzer—perhaps he had an appointment with somebody here. Wolfgang entered the garden and followed the man, who turned aside into one of the by-paths and went into a small booth, in which a round table and a few chairs were dimly lighted up by a wretched little lamp in a glass dish, hanging from the ceiling. When Wolfgang reached it, he heard the man order a bottle of wine of the pretty waiter-girl, and then he saw how he took off his hat and rested his head so that the long dark locks hung wild and dishevelled over his slender, white hands.

It was Munzer.

Still Wolfgang hesitated to address his friend. Munzer had evidently not chosen this lonely place, the quietest part of an unpopular garden, in order to be in company. In his whole manner there was something that filled Wolfgang with pity, almost with fear. But before he had come to any decision, Munzer raised his head, and his eyes fell upon the young man, who now approached him and offered him his hand with a hearty greeting.

“Wolfgang!” cried Munzer. “Is it really you? and how did you get here?”

“I saw you enter the garden, and I followed you. I was on my way to your house. I am going to leave to-morrow, and I should have been sorry to go without having said good-by to you.”

“You are going?” said Munzer, thinking of something else. “Where are you going? Oh! I remember; they told me. You are going to enter the army, or rather you have entered the army, although you do not show it yet; and you are engaged to your beautiful cousin. How much a few months can do for a young student! But come, Wolfgang, sit down here! The pretty waiter will bring us another glass—won’t you, little one?—and you can tell me how all these wonderful things have come to pass.”

Munzer’s excessive paleness, and his eyes burning with subdued fire, contrasted strangely with the cheerfulness

which he affected. Wolfgang was painfully struck by it ; nor did it escape him that Munzer hardly listened to his recital. He became so sure that something very unpleasant must have happened to his friend, that he broke off in the midst of his report, and said, placing his hand on Munzer's : " Munzer, what is the matter with you to-night ? "

" With me ? " said Munzer, as if awaking from a dream ; " why should there be anything the matter with me ? "

" You do not hear what I say."

" Yes, I do. I have heard it all, every word ; and I have been wondering in my heart how our lives have been running parallel. Fate seizes us both and hurls us into the arena of public life, compelling us to enter the combat there, which we might otherwise have avoided like cowards. Now it is: Victory or Death ! The ships are burnt behind us ; we can no longer return to the land we have left."

" That may be true for you, Munzer, since you have been chosen to represent a nation. You will now enter upon an arena which will afford you sufficient room for the broad wings of your genius. Time has prepared the victory for you, and you go hand in hand with time ; you cannot fail to conquer. But I ? I feel conscious that I am destined to swim against the current of time, and that it will wash me ashore on the sand, the sand of the drill-parade—that is the arena opening for me ! I doubt that there are any laurels to be won there."

" I did not mean it thus," said Munzer. " The main thing is that you enter now into circles which have the enviable privilege of being free from those restraints under which we suffer all our life long. You will be a rich man when the old gentleman at Rheinfeld dies—very rich, I am told. Wealth is power. Use this power, this influence. Where we poor fellows work with our hands year after year, you can dig a mine and produce the same effect in a second. And do not speak harshly of our armies ! The armies are the iron rods of our masters. If you break the rod, their arm is powerless as a child's. A friend in the enemy's camp is as much as a gate that has not been locked, a sentinel who at a night's surprise gives no alarm, is a regiment which at the decisive moment goes over to us. I only wish I could fill every other officer's place with one of our men, and Europe

would be free in a week !—a freedom which would owe its birth to the treachery of thousands.”

“No, no, Munzer ! my liberty, the liberty I want, is not born so low. The European armies must change, it is true, if Europe is to be free ; but I think with Major Degenfeld : we must have a nation before we can have a national army !”

“On the contrary !” cried Munzer, with a gloomy smile, “we can never expect to become a nation if we have not first, in some way or other, organized a national army. No, no, *mon cher*, you labor under the same illusions which possess your uncle Schmitz and Doctor Holm, that a diseased state can be healed by slow medicines. Their remedies will soon prove useless, and then the appeal will have to be made to the *ultima ratio* of the kings, which is also the *ultima ratio* of nations. Then iron will have to cure what tinctures could not, and many a pile will have to burn all over the land, before the air of our state is sufficiently purified to let men breathe freely again. I tell you, Wolfgang, the day is coming when the great idea to which we have devoted our lives, the freedom of all nations, will spread over Europe ; when the whole of mankind will be stirred up to the lowest depths, and a new world will arise from this chaos. Happy the man that escapes the deluge ! But we must be prepared, not to be saved, but to perish in sight of the desired haven—prepared to see those we love, push us into the deep waters in order to save their own lives. But that must not discourage the man who is doomed to fight and to die for this great idea. His fate has been the same from the beginning of the world. Father and mother have cursed him ; friends have betrayed him ; wife and children have turned from him and denied him ; this beautiful earth has been changed into a desert for him, and where the foxes have holes, he, like the greatest of all, has not where to lay his head. And yet he must go his lonely way ; for what drives him onward, is stronger than his own self, and tears are useless ; what remains to him always and everywhere, is the faith in his great idea, the golden star of promise.”

Munzer’s face glowed with enthusiasm ; his eyes shone with the bright fire that burnt in his soul—but it was only for an instant ; then his face assumed once more its haggard,

sorrowful expression. He pushed the glass, which he had scarcely touched, from him, and said: "You have to go, Wolfgang; it is late now, and you start early to-morrow morning."

"And you?"

"I will stay a little longer. The evening is so beautiful, the garden so quiet. I have much to think over; I can do it better here than at home. And then you see the bottle is still full; I must empty it."

And Munzer's lips quivered with a bitter smile.

Wolfgang rose; he saw that Munzer wished to be alone.

"Farewell, Munzer," he said. "When shall I see you in Berlin?"

"In a few days, I hope. Farewell!"

They shook hands across the table, and Wolfgang left the garden. Turning round in the dark garden-walk, he saw Munzer sitting again with his head buried in his hands, the picture of painful, suffering isolation.

Wolfgang felt the deepest pity for the unhappy man. He would have liked to turn back again; but he dared not, and went into the street, sighing deeply.

The next morning, soon after seven o'clock, an open carriage drove up very rapidly to the front gate of the railway station. In the carriage sat Camilla and her mother.

"Has the train left?" asked the older lady, as a porter stepped up.

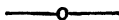
"Five minutes ago!" replied the man.

"Oh, how provoking!" exclaimed the lady.

"I said it would be so!" remarked Camilla, who had not risen from her corner.

"Well, we must tell him in your next letter—such things are always better settled in writing," said her mother.

"Home, Jean!"



CHAPTER XVII.

THE short winter day was drawing to an end. The sun, which had only appeared now and then as a red disc through the thick vapory clouds, showed itself clearly before sinking below the horizon, and poured a flood of light over the gray waters. The river was swollen by wintry storms ; here and there cakes of ice were drifting down wildly, harmonizing with black fields swept clean by the wintry blast. The light was faint and uncertain, full of sadness ; and such it appeared to an old man and a young lady who were walking up and down by the side of a tall hedge of spruces in the garden of the parsonage of Churchtown. The two children who were playing between the leafless bushes and over the bleak flower-beds, clapped their hands with joy, and the little girl exclaimed : "Oh, what a pretty fire."

"That is not a fire, Ella," said the boy.

"Yes it is," replied the girl, warmly ; "a red fire, is it not, mamma ?" and she came running up across the parterre.

"No, my child, that is the sunset," said Clara, pushing the curls out of the wild girl's face ; "but you ought not to run across the flower-beds ; your uncle has told you so often enough."

"But there are no flowers now," said the girl.

"That makes no difference. Children must obey. And there are plants there ; only they lie in the ground and sleep ; and if you run over them, they wake up, and then they feel cold, because it is winter, and they cannot fall asleep again, it is so cold."

"Oh, the poor flowers !" said Ella, "I'll never wake them again."

"That is right !" said the mother. "And now kiss me and go in ; it is too cold for Charlie."

The little one raised herself on tiptoe, and as the mother bent down she wound both her arms around her neck and kissed her again and again, almost vehemently. Then she ran away—not across the flower-beds now—and carried her brother with her into the house.

"How can you talk such nonsense to the child?" said Mr. Ambrosius Kandle, as he offered his arm again to his niece to continue their walk. "Such pretty stories are poison for a child whose fancy is already apt to run away with her."

"But I know that I attain my end in this way. I am sure she will take care, in her wildest romping and racing, not to step on the beds, so as not to wake the flowers. If I had said, 'You injure the plants,' she would have replied: 'What harm does that do?'"

"You encourage in the child a tendency which has caused you much trouble in the child's father, and which has finally destroyed your happiness in marriage."

Clara did not answer at once; her eyes were fixed upon the tops of the tall linden-trees, against which the sun shone red, but the light grew paler and paler every moment.

"I do not know, uncle," she said at last, "that I have not acted wrongly, and misjudged Bernhard's character. Since this exuberant fancy has developed itself in Ella so powerfully, since I see how the child colors everything, even the most ordinary and familiar events, with the brightest hues of her imagination, and how all talking and warning against it are fruitless, I think very differently of Bernhard's whole being."

"What are you going to tell him in your letter?" asked the uncle.

"I do not know yet," replied Clara; "I am afraid the moment which I hope for has not come yet. He mentions again and again, in his letter, that he is more than ever convinced of being called to the one great purpose on earth, to help his nation to recover its freedom. He even says in one place: 'I could as yet not offer you anything more than that love which did not satisfy you, and which would satisfy you even less now, when you can live far from me and be happy.'"

"Live! yes, but how?" said Ambrosius. "Be happy? If it were so! But you long for him by day and by night; you have no other thought and no other wish but to be reunited to him. Why do you not say so openly and frankly? Truth is the greatest wisdom; and to go straight at your aim, the best diplomacy."

"In this case the straight way would be the sure road to

failure," replied Clara. "My aim is to see Munzer happy—with me, if that is possible ; if it cannot be, without me. He must first learn, to his entire satisfaction, that it was not I who kept him from being perfectly happy. And when he has found that out, and asks me to come back to him ; and if I then still feel the strength in me to be the mate of such a haughty spirit—then my wish will be fulfilled ; and I do not deny it, that it is the only, the eager, consuming wish of my life."

"For heaven's sake!" said the old gentleman, after having for some time hummed a melody, a sure sign of his being out of humor ; "spare me these new-fangled notions ! Husband and wife were not intended for platonic conversations, but—why should I discuss with you matters on which we can never hope to agree ? But you have not yet explained the riddle to me : why you will not show yourself to Munzer as you do to me ? If you had done so, he would never have let you go from him, for he would have known that, in the whole wide world, he could not have found a more zealous help, a more faithful friend, or, if I may say so, a better comrade !"

"No," said Clara. "Munzer does not know me, and it is, of course, more his fault than mine, that he does not know me better. At first I was too feeble and helpless for him to lean on me ; and when his example, the intercourse with him and his friends, and my own reflection, had made me better able to support him, I was partly ashamed of the strength I had secretly acquired, and partly I mistrusted it, because Munzer seemed to value it as nothing. At the time when he expected me to be everything to him, I could only be his faithful, loving wife ; and when I might have been more to him, he no longer expected anything from me. Thus we have passed each other in the dark ; but when the bandage is taken from our eyes—and I can feel with delight the precious light—then we will fall into each other's arms, and I shall be his wife in truth and in reality."

The old gentleman began humming his air once more, and this time so loud and so angrily that Clara took his hand, and said, smiling :

"Don't be angry, dear uncle ! You are a vastly learned man and a great philosopher, but, dearest uncle, you know

nothing about love. If you had a wife, you would wish like the others that she should not only keep the house in order and provide for your table, but that you should also be able to talk with her about your favorite authors, Kant, Spinoza, and whoever they may be, and all that is dear to your heart."

"To talk philosophy to a woman! that would be worth while!" growled the old gentleman.

"But you philosophize sometimes with me, dear uncle."

"You are an *exceptio*, a *rara avis*, a white crow."

A melancholy smile played around Clara's lips, but she said nothing.

Ambrosius had not ceased humming and grumbling. Suddenly he cleared his throat violently, and said in the tone of a man who has summoned courage to do a thing which he would rather not have done:

"Look here, Clara! I have a great respect for you; I can almost say you are the only individual of the species, *fem-inini generis*, for whom I have ever had real respect; but for that very reason I think you are too sensible to indulge much longer in this absurd and foolish illusion of an absolute passion of love. You must get over it, and you will get over it as soon as you see that your husband does not look upon love as a mystic and supernatural sentiment, but as a very tangible, substantial thing. The fact is that he, like millions of men, loves in woman only the sex, and—to cut the matter short—is at this very moment by no means as faithful to you, as you, of all women on earth, have a right to expect."

Clara had turned very pale, as the choleric old gentleman poured forth these words, which had long been weighing down his soul, and her voice trembled slightly as she said, with all the composure she could command:

"Have they told you that fable too?"

"That fable? How do you know it is a fable?"

"Because Munzer told me all, himself."

"What did he tell you?"

"That he had met a woman whom he thought very beautiful, as he could not well help doing, and that he had broken off all intercourse with her as soon as he felt it might get the better of him and turn him aside from his duty."

"When did he tell you so?"

"On the eve of his departure."

"And do you know who this woman is?"

"Antonia Hohenstein."

"Do you know her?"

"By sight. She is very beautiful."

"That is what he says—your husband."

"Uncle, how did he ever offend you, that you are so bitter?"

"Me? He never offended me, at least directly; but you, poor child, he has offended all the more grievously. I have long hesitated to tell you all that I have learnt from many sources. I waited so long, because I hoped you might at last conquer this ill-fated attachment, but instead of that I see you give yourself up to it more and more. I must, therefore, speak. Truth is always a good thing and a sweet fruit, though the hull may be bitter. Munzer has not broken off all intercourse with her; on the contrary, he has continued it in the most public manner, and still continues it, as far as I know. And my authorities are good. I have heard men in town, who were formerly very warm admirers of your husband, complain bitterly of his recklessness, mainly because it injures him and his party alike. I heard the general at Rheinfeld the other day speak of it very roughly and rudely; he had heard it all from the president, who had just been in Berlin, where he had met Munzer and Antonia quite frequently. To-day the steward at Rheineck told me that the baroness had sent word to put the château in order, as she would come home in a week to stay there for some time; and the reception-rooms were to be fitted up, as she expected to see much company—gentlemen, of course, for ladies do not visit this Baroness Hohenstein. I cannot help thinking that this looks very suspicious. A week after Munzer leaves Cologne, she goes off to Berlin; there she is seen only in ultra-liberal circles, that is to say, in Munzer's circles, where she plays the Aspasia. Hardly is the convention dissolved, and Munzer writes to you and his constituents that he will return to Cologne, than she comes back likewise, and goes, in midwinter, into the country, after having been absent for years, fits up her house for a number of visitors, and leaves no doubt on everybody's mind that among these visitors Munzer will of course not be wanting.

"You look quite pale, Clara, and your eyes are full of tears. Poor child! I would have given much to spare you, but we are told to pluck out the eye that tempts us, and I do not mean to let my brother's child perish because her husband is a wretch. Go in, my child! It is quite cool out here, and you will wish to be alone. I must go up to the old general, I hope for the last time, for I mean to tell him that if he will not listen to reason, I will have nothing more to do with him. I am tired of his baronial freaks. Good-by, my child!"

He kissed Clara on her brow and turned to go. Clara did not move. Her pale features were quivering with sorrow and pain.

"Uncle!" she sobbed forth, stretching out her hand towards him as he was slowly walking off.

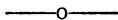
The old gentleman, who might have expected something of the kind, turned back, came close up to the poor woman, and said in a much softer tone than he had yet used that evening:

"What is it, my child?"

"I—I do not know. I have forgotten. I'll remember when you come back!"

The old man looked at her with a serious and sorrowful air as she tried to smile; then he turned suddenly, lest she should see the tears that rose in his eyes, and he went away towards the modest, one-storied house.

Mr. Ambrosius shook his head, hummed and grumbled in a most formidable manner, went humming and grumbling through the garden-gate, out upon the street, and walked off rapidly in the direction of Castle Rheinfeld.



CHAPTER XVIII.

AS his reverence, Mr. Ambrosius Kandle, in his high, well-blacked Bluchers, was walking through the village, and then on the road which leads from Church-town to Rheinfeld, along the bank of the river, no one would have suspected that he was seventy years old—his

step was so steady, and his carriage so firm and upright. He put down his heavy cane with great energy, and bored it deep into the sand on the shore; his eyes looked clear and sharp from under the heavy eye-brows over the gray waters of the stream as they rolled in mighty whirlpools. He answered with a hearty, powerful growl the greetings of the peasant women whom he met, although no one could possibly have made out whether he answered their "Praise be to Christ!" with the conventional "In all eternity!" or whether he growled at them a "Go to the devil!"

The women seemed to think the latter more probable; for after they had gone on a few steps, they looked back at the sturdy man in black, and crossed themselves devoutly, as if an evil eye had charmed them.

It must be admitted that the priest's eyes did not abound in particularly kind looks, and that his face was not one to inspire confidence; in fact, the graces had had little to do with his form and his manner of thinking. Nevertheless, it would have been a grievous wrong to consider him anything else but a good, kind man. It was an evidence of his independence of character, that his superiors were even less fond of him than his parishioners. The story went, actually, that the archbishop had said to some persons who complained of the liberal-minded, obstinate priest: "You may see how you can manage him; I will have nothing more to do with the rude fellow." No doubt Mr. Ambrosius shared this talent to satisfy neither those above him nor those below him with many other good people whom candor does not permit to go any other way than that prescribed by their convictions. There was perhaps not a lonelier man than Mr. Ambrosius. Such he had been when he came, forty years ago, to be installed priest at the village; such he was now; the only difference seemed to be that his plain face looked browner and more wrinkled, and his heavy eye-brows had grown whiter and bushier.

No one knew what sad experiences in life had made Mr. Ambrosius so brown and wrinkled, so knotty and hard, like an old oak stump. An old, old tradition said he had fallen violently in love with the mother of his pupils, when he was tutor in the family of a rich and powerful Roman nobleman, that this love had been reciprocated, but finally taken a

tragic end, as could not well be otherwise. The lady had been murdered by her jealous husband ; Ambrosius had taken refuge in a convent, in order to escape the fury of the madman, or, as others had it, in order to flee from the world in which his first attempt at happiness had been so signally unfortunate.

Clara had heard these stories often enough when she was a little child, and her parents spoke of Ambrosius, who was ten years older than his brother, Clara's father. The brothers saw each other but rarely. They agreed in very few things. Clara's father had been a teacher in the same college which Munzer had been compelled to leave on account of his liberal views in politics—an easy, good hearted man, to whom philosophy, and especially his brother's rigid ascetic doctrine, was a sealed book, and who had, therefore, an instinctive dread of the "eccentric old man." And the old man, on his side, did not know what to do with his brother, who knew nothing of his favorite books, of the Vedas, of Molino's *Guide Spirituel*, of Madame Guyon's *Torments*, and other mystic works. Still he had never forgotten that he had but one brother, and that brother but one child ; for when Clara's father died—the mother had died long ago—Mr. Ambrosius appeared instantly at the house of mourning, and comforted the poor twelve-year-old orphan as well as he could, by telling her that since Adam and Eve all men had died, that death was no more of an evil than sleep, and that it would become an evil only if there was an awakening from it, which was not likely as far as experience and philosophy taught him. Clara ceased crying, not because these arguments made any impression upon her, but because there was something in the whole manner of this strange old man which was sympathetic to her own reserved and decided nature, and as he, in spite of all the points of difference between them, resembled her father very much, she could understand him after a manner at least. He promised he would take care of her as far as his means permitted, and the priest kept his word. He paid all the funeral expenses ; he paid the unexpectedly heavy debts of his brother ; he paid the child's board and tuition in a convent to which she was sent ; and he would have done even more than that for her, if she had not at seventeen declared she would now

provide for her own wants. The one thing she had acquired at the convent enabled her to obtain a place as teacher in a boarding-school ; this was her skill in all kinds of work, in sewing, knitting, and embroidering, and it was here she had become acquainted with Munzer, who was teaching history and literature in the upper classes.

Since that time Clara had seen the priest but rarely. After her marriage he had written her a curious letter, in which he sympathized with her concerning the step she had taken. "A person who marries," he said among other things, "is like X, an unknown quantity, which can never be ascertained, or like a vessel which has lost its rudder and is drifting about on a sea full of reefs and sand-banks. But if you should ever suffer shipwreck, you know a harbor which will always be open to you. I am not a man for happy people, but the unfortunate have ever found a friend in me, as far as I was allowed to help others." Clara had never shown this letter to Munzer, for he did not like the old gentleman. "I am not fond of people," he said, "who insist upon being different from other men, and who do nothing to overcome their eccentricities. Your uncle, with all his philosophical radicalism, is in politics only an incorrigible old fog, and hence I do not like him."

The old man seemed to have totally forgotten his foster-child.

All the more surprising was it to Clara, when Ambrosius, who had not been in town for years, suddenly appeared at her house, during the spring of the year, and while the agitation about the elections was at its height. He had asked after her health, begged her to show him the children, and when Munzer came home quite late at night, he had made him promise that he would entrust Clara and the children to his care, if ever political disturbances or other difficulties should prevent him from providing for them at his own house. Munzer promised, though, as he said, only in order to get rid of the old man. He did not then anticipate that a few weeks later the little cottage in the suburbs, which he had occupied since his marriage, would be empty, and that he would be on his way to Berlin, while Clara wept at the uncle's house over her lost home.

CHAPTER XIX.

“OH, these women! these women!” murmured Ambrosius, bravely walking on his way. “How can we help creatures that will not forget and cannot learn anything?”

The old gentleman felt as uncomfortable as a physician who has prescribed a large dose of a powerful medicine, and afterwards begins to ask himself if he could, at need, justify his prescription before the tribunal of his Art. The wretched look which his niece had given him when he tore her fair dream so pitilessly to pieces, was burning his soul—it was like the look of a deer wounded unto death! Every time Ambrosius recalled that look, he stuck his cane angrily into the sand and gravel, and his sharp, piercing eyes looked almost savagely at the waters of the stream, which grew darker and darker, and up at the wintry evening sky, on which heavy black clouds were drifting slowly before a damp wind, uttering low but dismal noises.

Ambrosius pressed his broad-brimmed hat lower down upon his brow, buttoned his long black coat up to the neck, and walked more rapidly along the lonely path by the river-side. A stone, which lay in the path and against which he hurt his foot, made the vessel of his wrath quite overflow.

“A stupid world, a good-for-nothing, impudent, bare-faced world,” he growled. “I wonder how anybody can imagine God made it. An insane asylum is this world, a mad-house, full of old and young fools, cunning, malicious, stupid, and wicked. Yes, and the old fools are the worst, because they have no excuse for their folly, not even that of passionate, overflowing blood. I am such an old fool! What have I to do with the love affairs of others—I who have abjured, fifty years ago, all that foolish stuff of vanity and sensuality which men call love? Why do I not leave them in the low, misty air near the ground, if they cannot rise into the pure sphere of spirits? Why must I try to persuade this old sinner at Rheinfeld not to be afraid of death? Let him die, and rot in his sins, and carry the burden of his iniquity through all eternity! What have I to do with that? Does it concern me more than the silent brood in the waters

there, who swallow each other and re-produce again and again, and who are now, after millions of years, still the same they were in the day of creation? Is that a reason why I must use up my boots and knock my feet to pieces on this miserable road, and catch a cold and rheumatism in this damp night air? Hallo! Who is that?"

"I!"

"I!" cried the priest, angrily. "Everybody is I! Why can't you say at once that your name is Balthasar? And why must you hide in a thorn-bush by the wayside, and frighten people out of their wits?"

"His excellency sent me down to lie in wait here for your reverence, and to lead you through the park into the house."

"Ah! and why that?" growled the priest, following Balthasar through the narrow gate, almost concealed under briars and creepers, which the latter invariably used for entering and leaving the park. "Am I a murderer? Am I a thief?"

"If your reverence would walk close behind me?" said Balthasar. "In winter it is wet here, and we might easily sink into the morass if we missed the road. Why did his excellency order me to lead you this way, where few men are ever seen, and which is almost impracticable? Perhaps I may as well tell your reverence the true reason, which is, that Kilian—who does not belong to the class of good men—since your reverence has called here several times at night, now lets loose that big dog Pluto, who is as savage and bloodthirsty as a bloodhound, so that a stranger, coming alone into the court-yard, is not sure of his life; and although my company——"

"Look here, Master Hans," said the priest, walking by the side of the schoolmaster down a long avenue between two rows of beeches, through the bare branches of which the wind was whistling fiercely; "I never thought you were a fool, as other people seemed to imagine. On the contrary, I suspect you hear more with your big ears than you let out of your big mouth, and that you have more ideas under your bald and very ugly skull than is good for you in your situation. Now tell me, why has that old man, the general, so suddenly conceived such a friendship for me that he has sent for me to-day, the third time within a week?"

"Don't you know?"

"If I knew, would I ask you?"

"I mean, has he not told you himself?"

"Who on earth can make sense out of such confused speeches? What does he want of me? Out with it!"

"I do not know," replied Balthasar. "I only know that he called me up to him not long ago, as he sat in his bath-chair in the hall, and I was passing by to get my victuals, and said, 'Do you know a man, Balthasar, who is afraid of nothing?—not of man, nor of the devil?' After thinking it over a little while, I answered that I thought our priest, Mr. Ambrosius Kandle, was such a man. Then he said, 'Bring me the man.' Then I went and brought you."

"Hm!" growled Ambrosius. "Very flattering indeed! But suppose I am afraid of nothing—which, however, is by no means true, for I am afraid of many things, for instance of rheumatism—what is the old gentleman afraid of?"

"First of all," replied Balthasar, "of life, which his sufferings make a hell; of death, which he looks upon as the door of hell; of men, from whom he expects the worst; and of God, whom he imagines made after his own pattern, a god of wrath and of revenge."

"Then you think the old man is a great sinner?"

"Yes!" replied Balthasar, after some hesitation.

"And what interest have you in him that you should crouch by the hour in this damp, cold wind, near the high-road, because he tells you to do so?"

"The same interest, I dare say, which brought your reverence all the way from home to Rheinfeld."

"That's a different thing," growled Ambrosius; "I only do what is my duty and obligation in coming to the assistance of an unhappy mortal, although the old gentleman, who is not a Catholic, does not exactly belong to my department."

"And I do my duty," said Balthasar.

"Did the old man ever do you any good?"

"No, he has invariably teased me and scoffed at me; he has often, in his passion, beaten and ill-treated me. As long as I have known him, he has been a terrible man, and I used to be very much afraid of him."

"And now?"

"Now I pity him, as I would pity a venomous serpent that was lying half crushed on the highroad."

"Is that woman, your wife, still with him? He meant to turn her off the last time I was here."

"She is still with him; otherwise I would not be here."

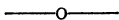
"How so?"

"Because she threatens to come to me if the general turns her off; and if she came to me, I should have to run."

"To run? And where?"

"Anywhere, even were it into the river."

"Pleasant company!" growled Ambrosius.



CHAPTER XX.

THE two had walked between the hedges and bushes, which, although leafless, were still impenetrable to the eye, till they came to the spot near the little lake from which the wife and the daughters of the president had watched the château on that memorable spring morning.

"If you will wait here a moment," said Balthasar, "I will go ahead and see if we can venture near."

Balthasar crept cautiously along the margin of the lake, and soon disappeared under the overhanging boughs of the willows. The priest leaned half against the up-turned stone-table and looked watchfully around him, his arms crossed on his breast. The situation was calculated to test Balthasar's good opinion of the priest's courage. Behind him strange and uncanny noises came from the dark depths of the park; all around him the dry bushes groaned and sighed in the chill wind; from the lake dismal fogs arose and spread themselves like a pall over the lower grounds; beyond the lake, the château loomed up, silent and dark, like a gigantic coffin; up on the tall tower a vane was creaking discordantly; and each time, like a furious echo, came the low howl of the bloodthirsty dog whom Kilian let loose at nightfall.

Ambrosius raised himself to his full height, and seized his heavy cane with his old but still powerful hand.

"I wish the old box over there would burn up, or some other extraordinary event would happen; this staring at mysterious darkness is intolerable. I wish these Hohensteins were where pepper grows. There must be an aristocracy, of course; aristocracy is a law of nature; the better man rules everywhere. But bad women and mad old fools are not an aristocracy. Is this Antonia Hohenstein, this modern Messalina, any better than Clara? Is that gray-haired old sinner yonder better than I am? And yet the haughty sinners triumph over poor dear Clara, and I stand here shivering in the night air at the edge of an old pond, sure of a fearful attack of rheumatism, for the sake of that old man. If that mad schoolmaster only would come back! I feel as if I had a murder on my mind—Holla!"

"Hush!" whispered Balthasar, who suddenly turned up out of the mist, quite close to the priest; "we must keep very quiet. They are on the watch; but it is of no use. Give me your hand!"

Ambrosius hesitated for a moment whether he should go on, or abandon the adventure before it was too late. But his personal courage, which did not easily give way before danger, and his heart truly generous and noble, and never yet known to have refused help and comfort to an unfortunate being, soon made him suppress the selfish suggestion.

"Come Balthasar!" he said, resolutely seizing the schoolmaster's hand. They went around the lake and came to the glass-door under the balcony with the four pillars, which led from the park directly into the garden-room. On the left hand of this room was the general's chamber. A faint glimmer of light penetrated the curtains of this room, which had been let down.

"They think the general is in this room," whispered Balthasar, "but I have taken him through the garden-room into the armory. I am often at work, at this hour, among the old lumber, because I have no time during the day; so they are accustomed to hear me rummage there. In the general's room we are not safe; they would listen at the door. I thought it was better to be in a cold room, safe, than in a warm room and betrayed."

Balthasar drew a key from his pocket, with which he cautiously opened the door of the garden-room, and then carried

the priest through a dark room on the right to a second door, which he unlocked with the same precaution. When they had entered, he bolted it on the inside and whispered to his companion to stand still till he had made a light. The garden-room had been dimly lighted by the tall windows, which came down to the floor, but in this room the darkness was impenetrable. The odor of rust and mould was so strong that it nearly took away the priest's breath. He felt his heart beating wildly, and very nearly cried out aloud, as a bluish light blazed up suddenly, and iron men with swords and halberds in their iron hands stared at him from all sides through their hollow helmets. The schoolmaster had lit a lantern, and the priest cast by its pale light a shy glance at his surroundings.

As far as he could make it out, he found himself in a very lofty and spacious hall, the walls of which were covered in the upper half with flags and banners and other emblems, while open shelves all around the room displayed vast numbers of weapons of every kind. Besides this, there were stands crossing the room in various directions, on which were lying hundreds of guns, rifles, carbines, and pistols. Then all kinds of lumber were scattered over the floor: broken armor, iron tools, broken furniture—a huge mass of *débris*, proving that the armory must have been used for years as an immense lumber-room. The whole looked to the priest so much like what he had read of mediæval torture chambers and similar places of horror, that his overwrought imagination conjured up new fantastic forms in every corner on which Balthasar's lantern threw now and then a feeble ray.

And a real picture of horror struck his eyes as he suddenly saw in the most remote corner of the hall to which Balthasar had led him, a crouching figure seated on a large box, in which he could only after some time recognize the old general.

The general had wrapped his long, lean body in a dressing-gown of fur, while a pointed night-cap covered his bald head. The wrinkled old face was shrivelled up from cold and fear; the dark eyes, which were still able at times to flash up fiercely, were glassy and fixed; the white moustache, which usually rose in two stiff points with the most martial preci-

sion, now hung drooping over the toothless mouth—the whole man was, all in all, a perfect picture of misery, rather than of terror; and when Ambrosius beheld this wretched being, evidently so much in need of assistance, he recovered at once the calmness which had abandoned him for a moment.

The general murmured something, which might have been a greeting. Balthasar unfolded a camp-stool, which he leaned against the wall, inviting the priest to sit down, close to the general. Then he put the lantern at some little distance on the ground, so that its light fell upon the two men, turned back into the darkness, which filled the whole remaining part of the hall, and busied himself with the armor, making, probably intentionally, more noise than seemed to be exactly necessary.

Balthasar had no sooner turned his back, than the general said in a hoarse, anxious tone, embracing the priest's hands with his long, bony fingers:

"Save me, priest!"

"From what? or from whom?" asked Ambrosius, unconsciously loosening his hands from the damp, cold grasp.

"From this horrid woman, this accursed witch, who threatens to bring me to the gallows."

"How can she do that? People are not hanged nowadays for nothing," replied the priest.

"For nothing?" repeated the spectre-like old man, nodding portentously with his long, tasselled night-cap. "Yes, yes—for nothing at all! and they should hang me now for that! after such a long time! and an old man, who has already one foot in the grave!"

"Let me tell you," said the priest, in an almost rude, severe tone; "it is evident that there is something on your conscience, or you would have turned off the old woman long ago, instead of minding her threats. I do not know that I can help you; and I doubt it, to tell the truth. But if you want me to help you, you must make a clean breast of it at once—the rest will follow."

"So that you might get me hanged, too," said the general, and his withered features were distorted in a hideous grin; "I'll have a care."

"Then do what you like!" said Ambrosius, angrily; "I

have no desire to get my death in this abominable ice-cellar," and he rose from his seat.

"Sit still, for God's sake," whined the old man in the night-cap; "and don't speak so loud, or Balthasar will hear you. I'll tell you everything, if you insist upon it."

Ambrosius sat down again. The old man seemed to collect his thoughts to commence his confession. At last he said:

"Suppose I became a Catholic, priest?"

"What do you mean?"

"They say if a man is a Catholic, he can do what he chooses, and no harm done, provided he tells his priest. The priest prays for him, and it is all right again."

"Not quite so easy as that," replied the priest.

"I'll pay a good round sum, besides," said the old man. "I won't mind a couple of thousands."

"No use at all," growled the priest. "One or the other of my brethren might possibly be willing to reconcile you, on such terms, with divine justice. But the thing cannot be so comfortably arranged with earthly justice. The question just now, it seems to me, concerns rather the earth than heaven."

"Then you cannot help me?"

"No!"

"Well, then, you can go to the devil!" cried the old man, savagely seizing a battle-axe which happened to lie near him on the box, to hurl at his visitor's head.

He would no doubt have carried out his purpose, if just at that moment a very loud knocking had not been heard at the door of the armory.

"Who is there?" asked Balthasar, who had been making a terrible noise with his armor and his helmets.

"It is I, you fool!" replied a screaming voice. "Make haste and get yourself home! Are you going to stay here all night?"

"I am nearly ready," replied Balthasar.

"Well, I hope you are, else—" said the screaming voice.

The old skeleton in the fur gown had moved up close to the wall during this conversation, crouching down low and trembling in all his limbs. Even Ambrosius had, in spite of his pluck, looked round for some better weapon than his

stick. Balthasar came up and whispered: "I knew she would not dare come in; she is afraid of the old lumber. But we shall have to go, your reverence! She'll close the window-shutters now towards the yard, and that is our time to be off."

"Then let us be gone!" said the priest. "I am ready, I assure you."

"But you'll come again, priest, won't you? You'll come again?" screamed the poor old creature, dragging himself slowly after them in his loose felt shoes and seizing the priest's long coat from behind.

"I'll see," replied Ambrosius, "but I don't see how I can help you."

"I'll give you half of my fortune if you make me Catholic, so that they can't hang me!" whispered the old man in the priest's ear.

"We'll see!" said Ambrosius.

They had reached the door of the armory. Balthasar opened it cautiously and looked out. "All is quiet," he whispered; "now, quick."

As Ambrosius was going to slip out, the old man held him back.

"I'll give you half of my fortune, you may rely on it."

"Quick! or we shall be too late!" whispered Balthasar.

The old man released his hold and slipped silently across the inlaid floor to the opposite side of the hall, and disappeared through the door which led to the inner apartments.

Ambrosius and Balthasar went through the glass door, which the latter locked carefully, into the park. Night had come, in the meanwhile. Balthasar had blown out his lantern and went ahead, Ambrosius following close behind him. They had made only a few steps in the dark, when a low, coarse voice called out at some distance: "Look, Pluto, look!" A loud howl followed the command; then they heard the brute rush through the bushes, straight towards the lake, near which they were. Ambrosius could not suppress a low cry, but Balthasar whispered to him: "He does not hurt me or any one who is with me; there he is; ah, Pluto! good creature, Pluto! There!"

The enormous brute jumped up at the schoolmaster, lay-

ing his powerful paws on the man's shoulders ; then he paid the same attention to the priest.

"Good Pluto! good!—now let us go!" said Balthasar, and the dog rushed back again into the bushes, while the other two continued on their way, hurriedly and silently, till they reached the little gate through which they had entered the park.

The priest breathed freely, as the breeze blew into his face, coming fresh from the river across the open fields. In the village of Rheinfeld, which lay to their left, and lower down near the river, a few lights were twinkling here and there. The road to Churchtown branched off here, and led some distance above the village into the path by the river-side.

"Will you go down with me as far as the river, Balthasar?" asked the priest. The tone in which he said these words was far more courteous than that in which he usually addressed the schoolmaster. The timid-looking little man had risen considerably in his estimation during the last hour.

"With pleasure, your reverence!"

"Tell me, Balthasar," the priest said, after a pause ; "since when has that woman become so savage against the old gentleman? I should have thought it was her advantage to live in peace with him!"

"Since this spring, your reverence ; since the visitors all were here. She never wanted the excellency to be on good terms with his relations. She scolds him now, because she says he is throwing away his money on these beggars, especially on Wolfgang, who is a very nice, affable young man, and as they say——"

"I know, I know!" said Ambrosius. "The old gentleman told me all about it. He has done more for his family of late than formerly, and the old woman does not like that. Do you think, Balthasar, she can really get the old gentleman hanged if she chooses?"

"She says she can ; but I think it is an idle threat."

"Hm, hm!" said the priest. "But here we are at the crossroads. I will not detain you any longer."

The priest turned and went on a few steps, then he paused and said :

"Balthasar, can you tell me how long it is since that

handsome, tall young fellow, George, from Churchtown, who was in the general's service, died?"

"That may be ten years now, your reverence."

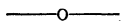
"I was sick at the time, and don't remember the story exactly. Did he not die very suddenly? what did he die of?"

"He was drunk, and fell in the middle of night down the steep stone steps in the tower, and so unluckily that he fell with his temple right upon the sharp edge of the lowest step, and died instantly."

"That was a very unfortunate fall," growled the priest. "Good-night, Balthasar!"

"Good-night, your reverence!"

The two men parted, and a few moments later they were out of sight, for deep darkness covered the wide stream and the bare fields that night.



CHAPTER XXI.

DURING the same dark and dismal night, several officers were sitting around a punch-bowl in the officers' quarters of the guard-house at St. Sebastian, a fort belonging to the fortifications of Cologne. The gentlemen had evidently been drinking for some time; the supposition was at least warranted by a long row of empty bottles standing against the wall, and by the more or less glassy expression of the young men's eyes.

The guard-room was a tolerably large corner room, which had windows on two sides. The furniture was extremely simple. A large sofa covered with black leather, an arm-chair of the same kind, a few cane-bottom chairs, a writing-desk, a cupboard for glasses and plates—all very much out of repair. Above the sofa, on the wall, hung a large portrait of the commander-in-chief in a black frame; and from the ceiling, above the bowl, a lamp with a green shade, the light of which was considerably obscured by the tobacco-smoke which rose incessantly from half-a-dozen cigars, forming a dark reddish haze around the lamp.

"Suppose we console ourselves during our host's absence by a little play," said Cuno Hohenstein, breaking a pause in the conversation, during which the cigars had been glowing with unusual energy.

"Suppose we don't till your cousin comes back," said Todwitz, a blond, modest-looking youth. "I should think it was not the correct thing to do such a thing during his absence. What do you think, Willamowski?"

"Wha—a—at?" said the baron, who had profited by the pause in the conversation to take a little nap.

"Todwitz proposes a toast: Camilla Hohenstein!" said Lieutenant Wyse, brother of the assistant-judge, and much dreaded on account of his wit.

"*De tout, mon coeur!*" said the baron with great promptness, but with uncertain voice. "*Je l'amie de tout, mon coeur!*"

A shout of laughter received this confession, and encouraged Lieutenant Wyse to practice his wit a little further at the expense of the half-intoxicated man.

"Drink out, baron! the glass must be emptied when we drink a lady's health!"

"*De tout, mon coeur!*" stammered Willamowski, emptying the glass the other had filled for him, and then sinking back in his corner of the sofa. Wyse beckoned to the others: "Willamowski, do you hear me?"

"Yes, in three devils' name, what do you want?"

"You said in your sleep you worshipped Camilla. Hohenstein, who has just come in from going the rounds, heard you, and is furious. He insists upon fighting you!"

"*De tout, mon coeur!*" stammered the young man, overcome with sleep. "All right! *Elle m'aime aussi—elle m'ai—*"

"You had better stop now, Wyse," said Todwitz. "You might go too far."

"Besides, he won't tell us anything new; we know all about it," said Lieutenant Count Hinkel, the nephew of the general of that name.

"I don't know! That last thing about her loving him might not be so perfectly true!" said Cuno Hohenstein, who had made a very wry face during the scene.

"For heaven's sake, Cuno, you don't mean to bring up your old notions?" cried Wyse. "No, my dear boy; no

harm done to your usual good luck among women ; but in this case you have failed, failed miserably."

"Failed as miserably as your brother in his examination, with seventy marks short of the standard !" said Hinkel.

Ensign Odo was roused from his lethargy by this somewhat indelicate allusion to a misfortune which had befallen him a few weeks ago for the second time. He could never resist the second bowl and the sixth cigar, but the shock was too rude.

"I'd much rather fail ever so badly than march by on parade, in the way Wolfgang did to-day," he snarled.

"Yes indeed !" cried Hinkel ; "that march was simply horrible ! The time already was horrible, but when they marched by the general—great heavens ! Upon my word and honor !—first to the right, then to the left ; they gave way like a flock of geese. Uncle was beside himself. He said he had never seen the like of it in his life—that was the result of book-learning—arrest in his room—well ! You know the old one ! I think Wolfgang came pretty near being sent to the guard-house !"

"Or being cashiered, like the major !" said Wyse.

"Well, gentlemen, among us be it said, Degenfeld deserved it all," said Hinkel.

"Did you read the pamphlet ? Is it really so bad ?" asked Todwitz.

"Bad ? I should think so !" cried Hinkel. "Upon my word and honor ! I saw the thing on my uncle's writing-table and ran my eye over it. A small little thing, but such nonsense ! He denounces everything, everything, I tell you ! Arms bad, tactics bad, parade-march nonsense, large garrisons useless ; instead of these he wants camps like the French camp at Chalons ; one year's service for the infantry, eighteen months for cavalry and artillery. And to cap the climax, non-commissioned officers to have preferment—become officers !"

"Nonsense !" said Wyse.

"As I tell you, Wyse ! To become commissioned officers ! He thinks it will be an immense advantage to the army !"

"The fellow must be mad !" said Cuno.

"Looks so !" echoed Hinkel.

At this moment a sergeant entered.

"What do you want?" thundered Cuno.

"Report."

"The lieutenant is going the rounds. What is the matter?"

"A man has been arrested—resisted the sentinel!"

"All right! Put the fellow into the black-hole. I'll tell the lieutenant when he comes home."

"Aye, aye, sir."

The sergeant turned on his heel and left the room.

"Nice things going on now," said Wyse. "Since the state of siege we have more persons under arrest every evening than formerly in a week. The rabble will have to learn manners now, and high time, too. But that man Hohenstein don't seem to be coming back again. Where can he be?"

"I suppose he calls at every post," said Cuno; "the tender conscience he has from his mother would not be satisfied otherwise."

"Look here, Cuno," said Wyse, "you had better say nothing of your cousin's humble descent on his mother's side. They tell a great many stories about you and that pretty Miss Schmitz. How is that? Has the girl any money?"

"Not a red cent. The uncle is said to have been rich; now he has lost everything; so you can see what the report amounts to," said Cuno, dipping his blond moustache into his wine-glass.

"Well, nobody thought you were in earnest, I am sure," said Wyse.

"They only looked upon it as a revenge on your cousin. He has stolen your Camilla, and you run away with his pretty cousin. But I'll vanish—Hohenstein can empty his bowl alone. Who'll come along?"

"I suppose all of us," said Hinkel. "Hallo, baron, we are going home."

"*De tout, mon coeur!*" said Willamowski, rising in his sofa corner.

"I have an awful headache!"

"You'll feel better in the fresh air. Here is your sword!"

The gentlemen buttoned up their uniforms, put on their swords, and drew their paletots around them, just as Wolfgang entered the room.

"Why, gentlemen," he said, "you are surely not going already?"

"Already?" said Wyse. "It is one o'clock, and none of us came home this morning before six. Why did you stay out so long?"

"Well, I made as much haste as I could."

"Then you must be tired," said Wyse, dryly. "Good-night."

"Good-night!" said Wolfgang, as dryly and curtly; "speed the parting guest, you know!"

The gentlemen took their leave, not without various allusions to "his excessive zeal, which would no doubt cool off in the course of time"—allusions which Wolfgang understood perfectly. He knew but too well that it was in the eyes of his comrades the most ridiculous and at the same time the most impolite thing in the world towards guests in the guard-room, if the officer on duty really went the rounds, as the regulations required him to do, visiting every post within the *rayon* of the citadel. They took it easier, and entered their report as if all had been done, while they sat comfortably around their punch-bowl. But he knew, also, that what others might do with impunity, might be severely visited upon him.

When his guests had all left, amid much amusement at the unsteady gait of Baron Willamowski and Ensign Odo Hohenstein, he ordered the windows to be opened, to let out the tobacco smoke and the fumes of the wine, and asked the sergeant on duty if anything had happened during his absence.

"A man has been arrested, lieutenant. I was ordered to put him into the black-hole with the other men, but the man looked like a respectable person, so I put him into the officer's room; the other room is full of vermin."

Sergeant Ruchel, a handsome, intelligent-looking man, would hardly have dared take such an irregular step if Wolfgang's kindly manner had not gained him the love and the confidence of his men during the fortnight he had been on service in the regiment. Still, he mentioned his infraction of the regulation with much hesitation, and felt evidently quite relieved when Wolfgang, instead of being furious, asked him quietly, and as if to obtain information:

"Must I keep the man here?"

"Won't be required, lieutenant. He has not been entered on the book. The lieutenant might take a look at him."

"Will you show me the way?"

"Yes, sir!"

Sergeant Ruchel lighted a lantern, took the keys from a hook on the door, and lighted Wolfgang up a narrow passage, till he came to a door, which he opened.

"Will you give me the lantern? Thanks! You can wait here!"

"Yes, sir!"

Wolfgang entered the small; damp room, in which a man sat at a table, his back turned to the door. He rested his head in his hands and seemed to sleep—at least he did not stir when the door opened. Wolfgang placed the lantern on the table and walked up to the stranger.

"Sir!"

The man started up.

"Uncle Peter!"

Peter Schmitz stared with dark angry eyes at the officer before him, whom he apparently did not recognize at first as his nephew. Then his face brightened up with a contemptuous smile.

"With whom have I the honor?"

"Uncle," said Wolfgang, with a voice full of emotion, "you ought to be more generous than chance, which makes us meet here face to face."

"Chance, my good friend," said Uncle Peter, who was too passionate to carry out the part he had proposed to play, "makes of us only what we make of ourselves: of one an honest man; of another—if you have no orders to give me, sir, you need not trouble yourself any further. I prefer decidedly being left alone."

"Uncle, uncle! you will be very sorry to-morrow to have treated your sister's son so harshly."

There was such a tone of deep and genuine sorrow in Wolfgang's voice, that Uncle Peter was moved by it, angry as he was.

"No use complaining!" he said, roughly. "What is done, is done; you must take the consequences of what you

have done, as I must take the consequences of my convictions. It seems that you command at the guard-house when your uncle has been put under arrest because he was impudent enough to resist the brutality of a patrol, who would not allow him to converse with some neighbors in the street. That may be rather strange, but what is done is done, and therefore you had better do what your duty requires. Am I to be put in chains? Or am I to be shot at once?"

Uncle Peter's affected calmness had left him long since. He was walking up and down with long strides in the little room, as he was fond of doing; and when he had finished his little speech, he stopped before Wolfgang with his arms crossed on his breast.

"I believe, uncle," said Wolfgang, with a sorrowful smile, "the matter will end in less tragic style if you permit me to accompany you out of this room and out of the citadel. You shall not stay here one moment longer than you choose."

"But I prefer staying here, my friend," answered Peter. "I mean to see how far this rule of the sword will dare to go. I do not intend being the foot-ball of arbitrary power, which takes up a citizen like a thief, and throws him without trial or judgment into a black-hole, and then sends him adrift at convenience. You have the power; I have the right. Let us see who will go farthest!"

"But, uncle, even if you have no sympathy with my painful position—if you do not mind my mother, who will be indescribably shocked and grieved by this accident, you ought at least to think of your own people at home. Think of your sister, who will be in despair about your long absence! Think of Ottilia, who is so warmly attached to you, and who will be inconsolable when she hears what has happened to you."

The mention of Ottilia's name seemed to make more impression upon Uncle Peter than all the rest.

"That is true," he said; "I had really forgotten the poor child in my anger. You have a good friend in that girl, Wolfgang. She has scolded me heartily for having spoken so harshly to you the night you came to our house; but I was very angry, as I was very angry just now when you came

in at the door. I believe she would scold me again if I refused your offer to let me leave this hole. But, by heaven, Wolfgang, I would rather stay than go."

"I am convinced of it, uncle, and I value it all the more highly if you go notwithstanding."

Uncle Peter seized his hat, which seemed to have suffered in the encounter with the patrol, and pressed it resolutely low down upon his brow, and went with Wolfgang to the door. But suddenly he stopped and said :

"Look here, Wolfgang, this will cause you no inconvenience, I trust—this letting me leave this—black-hole, eh? "

"I think not, uncle. The men are rather fond of me, and your name had not yet been entered in the book."

"Well then, come on ! " said Uncle Peter.

Wolfgang took Uncle Peter's arm, opened the door, and said to Sergeant Ruchel, who was walking up and down in the passage :

"I know this gentleman ; some mistake evidently."

"Yes, sir ! " replied Sergeant Ruchel. "Shall I see the gentleman out? "

"Thanks, I'll do it myself."

"Yes, sir ! "

Wolfgang took Peter's arm and led him out of the guard-house across the little court to the sentinel at the gate, who immediately unlocked the little door by the side of the great portal, then across the drawbridge of the citadel, down the slope to the turnpike, and past the last sentinel.

"There, uncle ! " said Wolfgang. "And now good-night ! "

"Good-night ! " said Uncle Peter.

Uncle Peter pretended not to see Wolfgang's hand as it was offered to him, and went a few steps ; then he came back quickly, and said in a voice trembling with emotion :

"Give me your hand, my boy ! You have more of the Schmitz blood in your veins than I thought. And you need not take very literally what I said in there about Chance making of us what we make of ourselves. I dare say you find it hard enough to do your duty. Good-night ! Look here, Wolfgang, give my love to your mother ! "

Wolfgang pressed Uncle Peter's hand, unable to say a word in reply, and returned to the citadel, lost in most melancholy thoughts.

CHAPTER XXII.

HE found it impossible to breath the cold air of the guard-room, with its stale odor of tobacco, after having sat a few minutes near the stove, staring at the smouldering sticks of green wood. He lit a cigar, buttoned up his paletot, and went out upon the high walls which rose immediately behind the guard-house, and extended to a bastion even higher than the wall. Here he walked slowly up and down. The night-wind was blowing, sighing, and groaning over the wide plain, stirring up the dry leaves of the trees on the glacis and bending the tall heads of the poplar-trees. On the night-sky dark clouds were drifting fast beneath the stars, which peeped through here and there so that their changeful light only made the night appear darker. To the left the city was sleeping peacefully at his feet, as if it would never awake again. The dark steeples of the churches stood up like disguised giants, and the colossus of the cathedral overtopped them all like a prince, in this realm of darkness. Wolfgang tried in vain to make out the outlines of familiar objects ; the longer he gazed, the more fantastic things looked, and even the large gun on the wall began to look like a monster crouching to make a spring at its prey.

This sad, black night, with its doleful sighs, harmonized with Wolfgang's frame of mind. His apprehensions had been so fully realized ! And what misery he had prepared for himself by acting contrary to his convictions, his better knowledge, and his conscience ! And who had been benefited by this sacrifice ? Not his father, who complained as much of his embarrassments now as before ; not his mother, who had withdrawn more and more from life, and whose bodily suffering had grown with her mental suffering in fearful proportions. And yet it was only for the good of his parents that he had assumed the heavy burden, a load which nearly crushed his soul. How was this to end ? Matters could not remain as they were, unless he was to be ruined in body and soul, and yet how could he change what seemed to be unchangeable fate ?

“Chance makes of us only what we make of ourselves !”

Wolfgang could not get rid of these words, which Uncle Peter had spoken. He heard them in the doleful howling of the storm, and in the shrill whistle of the night-breeze. Silent, gruesome night seemed to find a tongue, and to moan and to repeat forever and ever: "Chance makes of us only what we make of ourselves."

What had it made of Uncle Peter? A poor man, who in his fiftieth year had to abandon all the hopes of his youth, for which he had labored during a whole life with indefatigable energy, and to begin once more at the very point from which he had started! And yet how rich Uncle Peter was! Rich in the consciousness that he had never deviated a hair's breadth from the path of uprightness! rich in the consciousness of having always wished to do what was right, and of ever having been true to himself! How immensely rich Uncle Peter was! How well he could afford to throw back his sturdy head, with the short, gray hair, and to say in his short, curt way, which made every word sound like the blow of a hammer: "Chance makes of us what we make of ourselves."

What had Chance made of himself? The contrary of what he wished to be—what he now more than ever wished to be. The last few months spent in the capital, at the centre of political activity, in intercourse with Munzer and his friends, a careful observer of all that was going on, had made a man of the youth. He had discerned with greater clearness the aim of the colossal struggle which had begun not only in his own country, but in Germany, and in the whole of Europe. He had learned to distinguish among the masses the single groups of combatants who were the true leaders, and with this discernment there had come to him also a warmer love for the sacred cause of liberty and for the brave champions who fought under her banner, and a bitterer hatred against brutal force and its willing instruments. He had learned that the two parties were opposed to each other like Ormuzd and Ahriman, that there was no reconciliation possible between the spirit of the times and the spirit that prevailed in the profession to which he belonged. No reconciliation! No peace! And the benevolent peacemakers, the good-natured middle-men, were crushed in the fury of the battle and buried in the dust! This lesson Wolfgang had

learned from the fate of the excellent man who had met him at his first entrance into the military profession with open arms and friendly greeting—the fate of Major Degenfeld. They had found it out in an instant that he was the author of a pamphlet in which the defects of the army were laid bare with patriotic candor. He had acknowledged at once his authorship, and offered to prove every one of his statements by facts. But this offer was little to the taste of those who were at once his accusers and his judges. Truth! Proof! Subordination was what they wanted; blind subordination; swearing by the articles of war, the regulations of the service, and the infallibility of the sovereign, the commander-in-chief! These were, in their eyes, the true qualities of a good officer; he who did not possess these, was a bad officer, and the honor of his corps and of the whole army required that such an officer should be placed before a court-martial and should be cashiered on the spot. This had been Major Degenfeld's fate a few days after Wolfgang's return from the capital; it was a prelude to the state of siege which was declared a few days later.

Wolfgang had been terribly excited by these occurrences; and only the thought of his father, whom the last months seemed to have aged by so many years; and of his mother, whose infirm health gave rise to the gravest apprehensions, prevented him from returning the sword to the prince who had given it to him in his own name, and not, as it ought to have been done, in the name of the state. Major Degenfeld himself had advised him not to leave the army, even if it should only be for a while. "Do me that favor," he had said. "I feel an ardent desire to fight out my own cause alone and unaided. Your leaving the army just now would injure me in the eyes of many men, whose good opinion I cannot very well forfeit for the present." Wolfgang had to yield, although he was not convinced. Major Degenfeld evidently could not or would not tell him all.

Thus the clouds were rising from all sides on Wolfgang's horizon; and alas! the star, the golden star, to which he had looked up so trustingly at Rheinfeld—the star which he had hoped would be an everlasting light of strength and courage for him in all the dangers of this world—this star was nearly gone down, or perhaps it shone now only in his memory. It

is true, the family had taken great pains to efface all traces of the last painful scene before he left Cologne. They had written, on the finest pink paper, letter after letter to excuse the "ludicrous misunderstanding," and to assure the "betrothed of unutterable affection." Wolfgang had at first accepted these assurances with the credulity of a lover, had begged his beautiful correspondent to let the past be forgotten, and had then spoken of the subjects which filled his heart to overflowing, and of which he longed to speak to her who was to be his helpmate for life. But she had never replied to this part of his letters. She had continued to send empty, badly-written little notes, on the finest of pink paper, till Wolfgang's credulity even was shaken by this systematic silence, and he felt at last a despair in his heart which came near being fatal to his faith in all he had ever believed.

Perhaps Wolfgang himself was not aware how much this effect had been hastened by a letter he received from the house in River street, after he had been a few weeks in Berlin, and which he read over so often during the summer, that he knew it at last by heart. Even now, as he stood in the dark night on the wall of the bastion, to let the damp, cold west wind cool his burning temples, he thought of that letter again and again :

"Dear Wolfgang!—Auntie asks me to write you that she still loves you as of old, and that she hopes you will, for the sake of that love, pardon her incivility on that unfortunate evening before your departure. I do not think you will find it hard to grant her request, for you know as well as I do that auntie has the kindest heart in the world, and never means any harm, even when her passionate temper carries her away. You ought to hear how she defends you against Uncle Peter, who, I am sorry to say, does not speak very kindly of you yet. And still I am convinced that uncle also loves you dearly. I know it from a thousand little things, and I hear it even in his scolding. But you men are hard to manage when you talk about your principles; and I dare say you have to be stubborn if you want to get along in this rough life, which gives you so much to do, and requires all your strength. And yet I have always thought—and I have told uncle often enough—that two good and sensible people cannot fail meeting at the same goal, even

if they strive to reach it by different ways. Thus I hope confidently that you and Uncle Peter also are not quite so far apart in your views as it sometimes seems, only you ought not always to be so impatient at once and so violent ; then you would understand each other much better. I see that every day in aunty and uncle, who do not seem to agree in their views on anything, and who still, in truth, always want the same thing. I have seen your mother several times. She is so kind and sweet, and we often speak of you."

It occurred to Wolfgang that from another part of the wall he would be able to look down upon that part of town in which River street was. He went there. The sky had cleared up a little ; and by the light of the stars, one could, after a fashion, recognize the long lines of houses, in which here and there a dim light was seen, a night-lamp perhaps by the side of a sick-bed. And as he stood there looking down, a feeling seized him like home-sickness for the old house in River street, in the dilapidated rooms of which he dreamt away and played away the happiest years of his boyhood, and which had ever appeared to him in the light of an asylum from the storms of life. He felt a longing after the good people who dwelt there struggling so manfully with misfortune, and so modest in the hour of success—after his gray-haired, busy uncle—his kind, violent, sympathizing Aunt Bella, and the tall, slender girl with the deep-blue, affectionate eyes, who had met him like a fair, long-looked-for sister, so familiar, and yet also so strange, and whom he certainly loved as dearly as a brother loves his sister. It appeared to him almost madness now that he had shyly avoided the house in River street during the weeks since his return to his native town, as if he were an exile, an outlaw, who dared not cross the threshold of his domestic Lares. He ought to have gone there, as his mother begged him to do, as his own heart prompted him to do ! They would most assuredly have received him more kindly than in that other house on Government square, where every face and every piece of gorgeous furniture stared at him with deadening formality ! Oh, that he had gone there ! He would have found there comfort and encouragement, in the fever of repentance and doubt which was consuming him ; he would

have met his uncle to-night very differently ; he could have heard him say with comparatively quiet conscience : " Chance makes of us only what we make of ourselves."

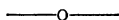
Thus the thoughts floated through Wolfgang's soul as the clouds were racing and raging high up in the heavens through the night-sky.

The long-drawn "Guard !" of the sentinel aroused him from his reveries, and reminded him of his easy duties, which still weighed on him like unbearable burdens.

"Relief! Forward, march!"

"When will that hour come, which will restore me to myself ; the hour of relief from this wretched yoke?"

"Not until I call it forth myself, 'Chance makes of us only what we make of ourselves.'"



CHAPTER XXIII.

THE Baroness Antonia Hohenstein had arrived a few days ago at her château, Rheineck, and after having cursorily inspected the arrangements ordered in her letters, she had expressed her satisfaction. The hall was suitably filled with exotics from the green-houses ; the rooms were well aired and warmed ; the covers had been removed from the furniture, and busts and statues well dusted. "It is all just as I wished, dear Vettel ; quite as I wished, dear Mrs. Vettel !" The last words were addressed to Mrs. Vettel, who was by no means rejoiced at them. For she and her husband had hoped for warmer praise, and were, therefore, grievously offended by the indifference which the baroness manifested.

"If that was all," remarked Mr. Vettel, "we need not have plagued ourselves quite so much!"

"You are right," said Mrs. Vettel, a fat, good-natured woman ; "but the baroness does not look half as well and as bright as she did last spring. She must be sick, and you know we ought to make some allowance for that."

"Pshaw!" said Mr. Vettel. "Great people never are sick. That happens only to us poor people."

However it might be with Antonia's health, her less fresh and hearty appearance was certainly not easily overlooked ; and if bad humor was a symptom of sickness, Antonia's state of health also could not be very good. She rarely left her room ; and when Mrs. Vettel—Antonia did not allow any other female servant enter her room—appeared upon being summoned by her bell, she found her invariably sitting or lying in a *chaise longue*, and always with the same haggard look in her beautiful features. Only once Mrs. Vettel had dared ask the baroness if anything was the matter, and the baroness had answered in a very ungracious tone :

“ I am tired.”

Mrs. Vettel was almost glad when the day came on which the gentlemen were to arrive. Now the baroness would no longer be tired. Some of the gentlemen would probably stay several days, and that would furnish amusement for a time. Mr. Vettel, who had taken some letters to town a few days ago, even hinted that he knew also who the gentlemen were, but he would not enter any further into the interesting subject, prone as he generally was to talk without the slightest restraint.

The company was expected at dinner ; but at ten o'clock already a close carriage arrived from town. A tall gentleman, with his cloak nearly covering his face, jumped out and entered the house. The carriage left immediately.

A few minutes later the gentleman and Antonia were sitting opposite each other in the reception-room. The lady on the sofa, the gentleman in an arm-chair. The expression in their faces, however, was by no means one of particular pleasure or even of social courtesy. On the contrary, both looked dark and dismal. They had hardly said a word to each other, and yet they looked as if they had had a very unprofitable conversation.

“ You look tired, Antonia,” said Munzer.

“ I am tired ! ” replied Antonia, raising her beautiful eyes to the ceiling.

“ Then you will not stay long in the country ? ”

“ I thought you knew it was not for my pleasure that I had come to the country in mid-winter ? ”

“ Certainly, and our party will give you all the more credit for your sacrifice ; but I think—and I believe our conference to—

day will make the others come over to my opinion—we shall either soon go to work or leave it altogether undone. As your stay here is only useful in so far as it gives us a safe place for our meetings, it will not be necessary after either resolution has been agreed upon. Don't you think so?"

"Why do you treat me so formally to-day?"

Munzer's face showed a melancholy smile.

"Pardon me if I do so; but you know when politics are on my mind I am apt to forget everything else."

"When politics are on your mind? Is there ever anything else on your mind?"

"And that subject has lost its charms for you—if it ever had any?"

"I cannot deny, Munzer, or rather I will not deny: I am heartily tired hearing nothing but Revolution and Reaction discussed. I am tired of your eternal Parliament and Provisional Government, Socialism and Communism, Camarilla, Absolutism, and whatever else your catchwords are; especially as I do not see that all this talking leads to anything."

"You will do me the justice to say, I hope, that it is not my fault if we are not further advanced!"

"Oh yes! But does that alter the case? Does it not prove only what I have always said, that you sacrifice yourself for people who do not care for your sacrifice, who do not want to be saved. I confess I once was quite enthusiastic for your ideas, but I am not capable of being so permanently for mere ideas, of hanging all the time in the air, and never putting foot on solid ground."

"Pardon me, Antonia; you wrong the poor ideas. They may be such as can never be entirely realized on earth, but he who works for them must not mind a few years more or less, for he knows that ideas are immortal, as humanity is immortal."

"But I am not immortal, and I want to enjoy life," said Antonia, impatiently; "and besides, you contradict yourself with your theory of immortality. Who is it who always urges to action? Who is beside himself that there is no action? Who threatens all the time to forsake these dull blockheads whom nothing can set on fire? Why do you talk to me of immortal ideas, in which you do not believe yourself?"

"I fear, Antonia, we no longer understand each other."

"Or we have never done so."

"Then, of course, it would be ridiculous to try at the eleventh hour to understand each other."

Munzer rose and walked up to the fire, in which only here and there a few coals were still glowing. It might have been a fine brilliant fire when the flames seized at first upon the dry wood, but the red flames had vanished, and the wood was consumed; the warmth spread over infinite space, and after a few hours one would hold the chilled hands over the gray ashes, and withdraw them again, chilled as they were before.

A hand was laid lightly on his shoulder. He turned round and tried to reply to Antonia's inquiring glance with a smile, but the smile died in the effort. He sank back in a chair, and hid his face in his hands.

Antonia knelt down by him and gently drew his hands from his face.

"No, let me kneel here, Bernhard! I have offended you grievously and can make amends only on my knees. But you ought to be just, too. How can I help it, that I have no mind and no heart for your theories about rendering mankind happy—that I have no sympathy with the multitude, and can live only for one, for you? I thought you could be happy only in great political circles, and therefore I entered into that life; but since I see that this hateful life of politics makes you no happier, I hate it more than ever. If it were to bring you honor and power—if I could see you president of the republic—as I saw you in my dreams the night after your great speech—that would not be much, but it would be something. I have long sought a substitute for love in wealth; perhaps power might replace for you that love which you are forever seeking and never finding—not even with me. Yes, Bernhard, not even with me! You have not been happier in my company than—you would have been in company with any other woman; than you have been in the arms of your wife. I am even persuaded I have been a burden to you for some time. You shake your head? Well then, prove to me that you love me! Leave these wretched politics, this political *miserè*, which will never come to anything! Be entirely mine, as I am entirely yours. Come with me to Italy! No, not to

Italy—for there things are even worse than with us. To the East, to the coast of Syria, of which I read to-day in *Lamar-tine*—where nature is divinely beautiful, and we can forget under palm-trees and cedars this horrible land and these dreadful politics!”

“And my children?” said Munzer, “what is to become of them?”

Antonia let Munzer’s hands drop, and rose.

“I forgot once more that—you are married,” she said, coldly; “why do you not take your children? They are yours!”

“They are a thousand times more their mother’s. I cannot take the children from their mother.”

“Then you had better take them all back, mother and children, if you cannot and will not set yourself free.”

“I have indeed the intention to do so.”

“And you came so early to tell me this?”

“I meant to tell you so, but not in the way I tell you now.”

“But you meant to tell me? The “how” does not matter much. Let us go out a little while; it is so sad and tiresome in the dark rooms. Let me ring the bell!—when do you think the other gentlemen will come? I am glad *Degenfeld* is coming; he really looks very elegant, and yet manly. I believe he is a man who knows perfectly well what he is about, although circumstances have placed him in a false position. Ah! here you are, dear *Vettel*! Please bring me my hat and my shawl!—Ah yes!—There they are! I had quite forgotten!—Thanks!—Are you ready? Yes?—Well, that is nice. We’ll be back in half an hour, *Vettel*! We are just going in the park, if anybody should come——”

“I do not think you want my company,” said Munzer, after they had been silently walking up and down a few minutes in the park avenue, which extended from immediately behind the house down to the park; “and I presume I had better return home under some pretext or other.”

“Or perhaps you had better still go at once down to the village! There is the road; in half an hour you can be at the parsonage.”

“I shall not go there; but I shall also not be your guest any longer. Farewell, *Antonia*!”

Munzer paused. Antonia went a few steps further ; then she turned abruptly round, came back to Munzer, and said : "Then I am nothing to you any more ; or rather, I never have been anything to you ? Speak out boldly for once ! I have sent off lovers enough ; I should like to know how it feels to be sent off !"

Her cheeks were glowing and her eyes in flames. She was fairer than Munzer had ever seen her ; and although the charm with which that beauty had once entranced him had lost much of its power, it was still quite powerful enough yet to make his heart beat higher.

"Which of us is sent off ?" he asked with a bitter smile, as he walked by Antonia's side further down the avenue. "Neither of us ; or, what would be infinitely worse, each of us wants to be the one ; but that only proves that there is a discord in the relations between us, which mars all the delight we have ever been or might have been to each other. We cannot ignore it, and the sooner we make it clear to each other, the better for both of us. I have felt the misery of such a want of harmony too deeply and too bitterly—elsewhere—not to know that as soon as it becomes clear and distinct to our consciousness, it is far better to dissolve the connection. I must speak and act, you know, as I think and feel, or I am the most miserable of men. I told you, when you came to Berlin, that I was not glad at your coming. A heart like yours, I said then, requires another kind of love than that which I could give you. You answered me by throwing yourself into the whirlpool of political life. Your salon became the rendezvous of the leaders of our party, and very sharp-sighted men were misled by the enthusiasm with which you seemed to enter upon our ideas and by the eloquence of your words. But I knew you better than they did. I knew that in the depth of your proud heart you had nothing but contempt for our cause, and that you could not feel otherwise and remain true to your nature. Another man might have been willing to accept the sacrifice you made for the sake of his vanity, but I cannot separate the person and the cause. If I could be satisfied with a soul which rests proudly contented on the wealth with which Nature had endowed it, I should kneel before you and you only ; for you know that I am irresistibly drawn to you, that

your beautiful eyes reflect to my mind the glory of the heavens, and that in your arms I could dream of the blissful happiness of the gods."

Antonia had listened to Munzer's words in silence and with downcast eyes. Now also she made no reply, as if she still would avoid the terrible struggle in her bosom between pride and love.

"You will tell me, perhaps, that I ask impossible things—that the love which binds man to woman has nothing to do with those ideas; but what then can love be? The intoxication of nectar, but still mere intoxication—an affair for gods or helots, which is not worth that the freeman should for such a stake shake the pillars on which social order rests. If I am not willing to abandon all my hopes and all my aspirations—if I am not willing to leave the world as I find it, ill-used, unimproved, doomed to misery forever—then I must at least find a woman as beautiful as you are, and one in whom the same thoughts dwell which are the very soul of my soul. But you look upon these thoughts as visions, at best fair visions. I cannot live without these visions. Therefore, give up the man of visions, Antonia; give him up to his dreams; take the reality which is your realm, in which you are queen ——"

"And you my slave!" cried Antonia, winding laughingly her arms around Munzer, and pressing repeatedly her lips upon his.

At that moment an old gentleman and a young lady passed the iron gate, covered with ivy, which opened from the park avenue upon the highroad. The old gentleman had just been saying that one could see the château through this gate by looking up between the noble old trees of the avenue, and thus they had stopped to cast a glance through the gate. The lady turned pale and fell, as if struck by lightning, upon her companion, who seized her around the waist with a strength which one would not have expected from so old a man, and drew her past the gate behind the high park wall.

"Courage, courage, my child!" whispered the old man; "think of your children—compose yourself!"

"I am composed," replied the lady, suddenly raising herself by a great effort; "now I am calm again. Come, uncle!"

"I think there were people passing the gate just now," said Munzer, gently thrusting Antonia from him.

"The fictions of your fancy, you man of visions," said Antonia, joyously; "dream as much as you choose, and kiss me as much as I choose, then neither of us will complain."

Suddenly a horse's hoofs were heard in the park, and immediately afterwards a horseman appeared in one of the side avenues, coming up at full gallop as soon as he saw the two.

"That is Wolfgang!" said Munzer. "What can he want? He brings evil tidings!"

Wolfgang beckoned with the hand from afar; then, when he was quite near, he suddenly checked his horse.

"What is it?" asked Antonia and Munzer as with one voice.

"Not much that is good," replied Wolfgang, shaking hands with them from the saddle. "It is fortunate I found you so soon. An hour ago a man who said his name was Cajus, brought me a note from Degenfeld. Here it is: 'Dear W.—You can trust the bearer. Consider with him what is to be done!' This man Cajus told me that Degenfeld, in whose service he had been for some little time, had just been arrested, that one of the policemen had whispered into his ear that the gentleman from Frankfurth had also been arrested at his hotel, and that Munzer would be the next one. He added that you had driven out to Rheineck early in the morning, and that you were to be warned, so as not to go into the trap. How could information be sent out to you? I offered at once to carry it myself, and Cajus consented after some little hesitation. I knew my neighbor's bay-horse, old Moss's horse, and here I am."

Wolfgang was by their side now, and walked with them towards the house, leading the horse by the bridle. Antonia looked anxiously in Munzer's face; Munzer looked thoughtfully down.

"Do you know, Wolfgang, that you have exposed yourself to considerable danger? That ride may cost you your commission!"

"Then I should be relieved of a troublesome burden," said Wolfgang, smiling. "But, in good earnest, Munzer, I do not think the danger is very great. A ride out of town

is innocent enough, and I shall take the precaution to return through another gate. Besides, the main point just now is to save you from the danger which threatens you. I thought, if you should wish to reach the railway as soon as possible, my being with you would probably protect you against any disagreeable encounter at the station. You will thus gain time; you can get out at any one of the stations and take what road you may choose."

"Why should he not stay here?" asked Antonia, laying her arm in Munzer's arm. "You are safer here, Munzer, than anywhere else."

"I doubt that very much, madam," said Munzer. "On the contrary, the experience of this morning shows how little we were justified in our presumption that we were here at Rheineck safe from the Argus-eyes of the police. There is no question that they had been informed by some means or other of our meetings here, and that it was only for the sake of greater certainty that they did not make the arrest here. But your plan also, dear Wolfgang, is impossible. My escape would ruin me irrevocably, and what is worse, the others also. They would look upon it as an evidence of guilt; imprisonment for months or years would be the sure consequence, if I were caught; and our party, deprived of its leader, would abandon the cause. If I return and allow myself to be arrested, they must set us all free again in a few days, and apologize into the bargain for their stupidity. The man from Frankfurth they cannot hold. Cologne is not Vienna, and Count Hinkel no Windischgrätz. Degenfeld has too recently joined us; he has nothing in his hands that could compromise him; and as for myself, I have been a long time prepared for such a case. They would not find anything in my papers that could not be put in a young lady's album. In a word: there is no choice here. Wolfgang mounts his bay again, and returns as fast as he can. The baroness orders her carriage, and sends me as far as the town gate. I enter there as an innocent foot-passenger who has taken a walk; have a chance of speaking to Cajus and the others, and then they may come and arrest me."

Antonia at first opposed this plan violently. She begged, she cajoled, but Munzer remained firm, and Wolfgang could

not help admitting that his plan was both expedient and entirely honorable. Antonia had to give way at last.

"But one condition," she said. "I must go too. I could not stay one minute in this miserable house if I am condemned to live here alone like an owl. The doctor and I can go together as far as my villa before the town gate. That is less suspicious than if you get out at the gate itself. And, less suspicious or not, I do not mean to stay here."

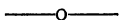
As Antonia could not be prevailed upon to abandon this idea, the men had finally to yield so far.

A quarter of an hour afterwards, Mr. and Mrs. Vettel followed the carriage with their eyes, as it drove off from the door where they stood.

"Who could that gentleman in black have been who talked so much to our baroness?" said Mrs. Vettel, thoughtfully. "But great heavens! where are you going, Vettel, a quarter of an hour before dinner?"

"Do you mind your business!" said Mr. Vettel, rudely. "I never ask you why the priest always wants to know everything that is going on in the house here. Good-by! I shall be back in half an hour!"

And Mr. Vettel took the road to the nearest village, the bright brass steeple of which shone brightly over the leafless trees in the noonday sun.



CHAPTER XXIV.

MUNZER'S calculations proved correct; they had set free the gentleman from Frankfurth, Major Degenfeld, and five or six others, who had been arrested the same morning, as their houses had been searched without result. In Munzer's house also search had been made after treasonable papers, but nothing of any kind had been found that could have been useful for their purposes, and so they had concluded to leave the formidable republican for the present undisturbed. "The cat Reaction has let us revolutionary mice run about a little longer," said Munzer on the following day to Degenfeld, "because we are not quite fat

enough yet ; but if we continue to rest on our laurels, as we are now doing, we shall soon have the necessary *embonpoint*. It makes me desperate to see how our cause is daily losing ground, while we do not stir to repel the enemy."

"What would it avail us," replied Major Degenfeld, "as long as we are not strong enough to defeat the enemy at the first attack? In politics success is everything. An unsuccessful attack is far worse than no attack, since it reveals to the enemy at once our numbers and our weakness. The government relies on the army. The army is faithful to them, and no breach has yet been made in their ranks. What will you do against them? Your few flint-locks, concealed here and there, are of no use. We can have no revolution that does not originate in the army, or at least find full sympathy in the ranks."

"You speak as a soldier, Major Degenfeld, and as such I fear you overrate the influence of your profession in a political crisis. It seems to me both improbable that the people should not be able to rise, relying on their own brave hearts and strong arms alone, and that it should be possible to revolutionize an army without passing first through the intermediate period of imperialism. Ah, Major Degenfeld, you do not know how I have toiled and labored, and how hard it is to have to roll forever the rock of Sisyphus!"

"Courage, dear friend, courage!" cried Major Degenfeld; "if you are going to hang your head, you who fight for your wife and your children, who receive as a reward for every cut with the sabre an affectionate smile or a bright hope—where shall I find courage? I, lonely owl, who have no one in this world for whom I could strive and battle? Give me a wife to love, and I will—no! I ought not to be boastful; I have of late seen too many gray hairs in my head!"

"A wife to love," repeated Munzer, and his eyes assumed an unusually rigid expression, which they had of late shown quite frequently; "to love and to be loved—well, that dream every one of us has cherished once upon a time—and lost again!"

"What do you mean?" asked Degenfeld, in surprise.

"I think our ideals are one thing, and life itself is another thing, and he who can make the two harmonize is—a happy man. Good-by."

"I verily believe I have touched a sore point in that man's heart," said Degenfeld to himself; "that would explain more than one riddle in his character. I must ask Wolfgang about it; he has known him for years."

Wolfgang had brought the two men together, soon after his return from Berlin, which took place almost at the same time with that of Munzer. They had soon become friends, as they had much in common. Both were idealists; both had strongly-marked characters, with a legitimate pride in their individuality and a sad want of charity for the foibles of others, and both had suffered much in mind during the last months. Munzer had just come home from a convention which had bitterly disappointed his most sanguine hopes, and Degenfeld had quite recently been victimized by the exclusive spirit of his caste. Both, therefore, were inclined to see the dark side only and to experience a feeling akin to despair in their hopeless struggle against stupidity and wickedness. Still, Degenfeld had thought more than once that Munzer's melancholy arose in all probability from more reasons than political disappointments. He had noticed this especially since Munzer's return from Rheineck, and he availed himself therefore of the first opportunity to ask Wolfgang for some details about Munzer's private life. Wolfgang could tell him but little. He had seen Munzer rarely in his family; the children were pretty and quite talkative; of Clara he could only say that she had made a pleasing impression upon him, and that yet he had always felt as if the quiet, modest little woman was not likely to satisfy Munzer's expectations. As Munzer had rigorously abstained from mentioning family matters at any time, he had come to look upon him almost as an unmarried man. At this moment, he added, Mrs. Munzer was staying with her uncle, a Catholic priest, in some little village of the neighborhood, he had forgotten the name.

Wolfgang was thinking of something else, when he thus rather stimulated Degenfeld's curiosity, instead of satisfying it. In fact, he was at that time entirely taken up with his own affairs.

"Will you help me? Will you advise me?" he exclaimed, starting up from the sofa, on which he had been sitting by Degenfeld's side, and walking up and down with impatient

strides. "I cannot continue to play this miserable part. Tell me that no man is bound to be a hypocrite, that no one, not even those to whom we owe our life, can ask of us more than our life, but that we are bound to preserve our honor, our sincere convictions, under all circumstances—tell me this, as I repeat it to myself a hundred times a day, and I pull off this uniform, which causes me more suffering than Hercules ever felt in the robe of Nessus."

"You are not quite yourself, dear friend," said Degenfeld. "I fear you have made a fearful blunder at drill, or you have been forced to play at domino with your comrades at the confectioner's!"

"Can you amuse yourself at my expense?"

"In good earnest, dear Wolfgang! I give to all your questions the same answer as you do yourself, and in spite of all that I must insist upon my view, that you would do better to continue a little while longer at your post. You must not reject the chances that may offer. Your father has not yet been relieved from his embarrassment; he told me so only yesterday; your mother, an angel of a woman, is sick, and requires more consideration than ever; your grand-uncle cannot live forever, and—I confess I should not like to see the immense fortune in the hands of your relatives. And then—the main point in my eyes—you owe it to your party not to abandon the power in your hands; you may become of far greater importance to us, dear Wolfgang, than you dream of in your philosophy."

"And you are really in earnest?"

"Really! Napoleon was, at your age, nothing but a simple lieutenant."

"But he was Napoleon."

"We want no Napoleon. We want a man with some military genius, which the Corsican had, no doubt, and with the holy enthusiasm for liberty, which he had not. Who tells you that you are not that man? Have you no talent? I tell you, you have talent, for you have a quick eye, a ready judgment, and a physical courage which is not the fool-hardiness that seeks danger for danger's sake, and those are the elements of military greatness. And as to your youth: we live fast in days like these, and then I am by no means of Munzer's opinion, that the crisis is likely to come to-day or

to-morrow. You are playing now a sorry part, you say ; I grant it is so ; but then, it is only a part. What I expect you to do hereafter will not be a part, but reality : you are to be the liberator of your country, the hero who slays the dragon by whom the princess Liberty is held captive—no, not slays, but forces him to serve the princess. Wolfgang, have you no ambition ? Or is the goal which I show you, not worth living for ? ”

“ But—pardon my question !—why do you not strive for it yourself ? Or rather, why did you give up the favorable position you occupied—the chances that were offered to you ? ”

“ Because—well, my young friend, I can tell *you*—because I did not feel in me the strength to undertake so great a task. I felt that I could only prepare the way for another. I know I have touched many a hardened heart ; I have cast a ray of light into many a mind that was not yet hopelessly dark ; I have done my duty ! ”

A brighter light had shone in Degenfeld's large, soft eyes, as he said these words ; but now a shadow fell upon his expressive face, and his voice trembled as he added :

“ But I do not mean to deny that I found it hard to make the sacrifice. I felt more than once disgusted with the vulgarity of those who persecuted me. I was more than once on the point of meeting my adversaries with arms in my hand. So far, I have been able to master my foolish impulses, and I hope to do so hereafter ; but let us speak of something else. I have a commission for you from our party.”

“ At last ! ” said Wolfgang. “ It has pained me not a little that they felt no more confidence in me.”

“ You ought to be grateful for that, dear Wolfgang. They do not doubt your good-will, nor your intelligence, nor your courage ; but they did not wish—at my special request—to put you into the false position of being entrusted with secrets which might be extorted from you by your superiors upon your word of honor. When the time for action comes, all that will be changed in an instant ; but at present the question is only one of diplomacy.”

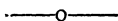
“ And what is it ? ”

“ You know that since the People's Journal has ceased to

appear, and ever since he went to Berlin, Munzer has fallen out with your uncle, Peter Schmitz, with Doctor Holm, and that whole party. I consider this, as matters stand, a great misfortune ; the party must be united, or we are irrevocably lost. I have seen that from the beginning, and endeavored to restore the *entente cordiale*, but so far without success. Munzer is obstinate and self-willed ; your uncle Schmitz seems, from all I can learn, to be a man of the same calibre. This peculiarity divides them more than their political differences, which are, after all, only trifling. Nevertheless it has come about that we are out of all connection now with those men and the large party which they control. There it is that we expect you to help us. We want you to inform us of the state of things in River street. You can, of course, act quite openly ; there is no call for *finesse*. Will you do us the favor ? ”

“With all my heart,” replied Wolfgang ; “I intended to pay my uncle a visit to-day. At last ! Since our encounter at the guard-house four weeks have slipped by ! You see what an energetic man I am.”

“Do you already begin scolding yourself, lieutenant ? ” said Degenfeld, smiling, as he accompanied Wolfgang to the door. “You ought to leave that to us ex-majors ; we have more cause for it. Good-by.”



CHAPTER XXV.

ONCE more the printing presses in the rear part of the house in River street were still and silent ; there was little prospect, even, that they would ever become active again. The printing-room, which in spring had been crowded with bearded faces, was empty ; and the good-natured face of Wensel Muller, the foreman, appeared no longer at the little window in the door, for the editor's room also was empty and deserted. The parrots on the hangings, pecking with their weather-worn beaks at mouldy fruit, looked more melancholy than ever ; the broad-sheet with

the funny story of the man who went cat-hunting at night, had been torn from the wall by the devil before he left the room for good ; and only a small fragment, with the motto, "Blind zeal is hurtful!" was still hanging there, as if in bitter mockery at the perfect stillness in the once busy rooms.

But the mockery would have been gratuitous, for it was not blind zeal which had silenced the People's Journal. The paper had been the zealous servant of the revolution, and had of course to leave as soon as the revolution was no longer able or willing to pay for its services. Its life might have been prolonged had it been willing to wear the livery of another mistress, but the faithful servant had too much self-respect to become a turn-coat and change its convictions. He struggled bravely. Through the whole summer and the whole autumn it carried on a brave struggle for life, and then died gallantly under its old flag. The sign to the left of the front door, on which the words "Office of the People's Journal" had been shining in hopeful golden letters, was taken down, and Peter Schmitz was ruined.

Peter Schmitz had foreseen this long since. In order to be entirely independent in the management of his paper, and to be able to preserve it for his party, he had gradually purchased all the shares, the owners of which were but too glad to escape so cheaply. He had then seen these costly shares fall and fall, and had invested more and more, till at last the paper had to die. Then only he had closed his books with a sad heart—and yet also with a feeling of relief, that Fate had at last taken from him this burden, which became daily more difficult to bear. It had not only been the impending ruin which had made him dislike the paper of late ; but almost more than that, the sad necessity in which the paper found itself, of making opposition to its former chief-editor, Deputy Bernhard Munzer, and the extreme radicals, whose leader he had become in the convention. Nothing pained good Mr. Schmitz more than this fact, for Munzer had been the friend of his heart ; he loved him still as he had probably loved no one on earth except his sister Margaret and his Ottilia. And yet he had been compelled to abandon him politically, and at last to contend with him, step by step, for Peter Schmitz placed the common weal

above the most intimate personal friendship, and to his best knowledge and his conscience Bernhard Munzer seemed now an enemy of the welfare of his country, and all the more dangerous as he possessed great talents, fiery energy, and an almost irresistible charm in his eloquence and his personal influence.

Perhaps Peter Schmitz would not have been able to carry out this contest, which made his heart bleed, in spite of his great energy, if Dr. Holm had not faithfully stood by his side. Holm was in precisely the same position as Schmitz, if not worse off, since he alone was held responsible for this disgraceful dissension in his capacity as Munzer's successor as the new chief-editor of the People's Journal. The papers in Munzer's interest accused him of ambition, of envy, of unfairness—and yet no man's heart was probably freer from such passions than that of Dr. Holm. He had lost in Munzer not only a friend, to whom he was most tenderly attached, but also an ideal, to which he had ever looked up with unbounded admiration. He had so often praised Munzer's articles before his friends as models of their kind in form and thought! He had been carried away by Munzer's eloquence, and emphatically compared him to Demosthenes and Cicero! No, Doctor Holm certainly did not enjoy appearing publicly against his former colleague; and those who had any delicacy of perception might have read the touching grief of the man, whom duty forced to do such cruel work, between the lines which he wrote against Munzer.

But though the sign over the basement windows had disappeared, and no gigantic hands in the great hall pointed any more up the narrow staircase, and down the creaking galleries, "To the editors' office!" Doctor Holm was seen as regularly as ever going in and out at the old house in River street. This was, of course, no surprise to those who knew (as, for instance, every dweller in River street with scarcely perceptible exceptions) that Doctor Holm had not only taken lodgings in two back rooms of the Schmitz mansion, but was regularly boarding with Aunt Bella.

The fact in itself was ordinary enough, and yet it created a great sensation in all circles where Doctor Holm's former manner of life was known; and there were not a few such circles, as Doctor Holm's life had for more than twenty-five years

been a public one in most respects. It was known that Doctor Holm, without being a gourmand, loved a good table ; that as a man of acknowledged good taste, he loved to live in large, well-lighted rooms, in which he could arrange his small but valuable Art collection to advantage ; and that he had for more than twenty-five years strictly obeyed these two principles : to live well and to be lodged comfortably. Now it seemed to be contrary to common sense, and especially to the enlightened good sense of Doctor Holm, that a man of such elegant tastes should all of a sudden assume the cross of a very ordinary table, if not a downright bad one, in company of an eccentric, ruined printer, and a capricious old maid ! No one presumed to think that he could ever have preferred such fare and such society of his own accord. On the contrary, they all agreed that Doctor Holm must have suffered serious losses by the failure of the People's Journal, and that his disappearance from his accustomed haunts and his retirement to the mysterious shades of the house in River street, was simply a consequence of this financial calamity.

No one believed this more firmly than Aunt Bella. No one pitied the good man more than she did, on account of the many comforts he had to deny himself. When Doctor Holm had proposed to her one evening to take him as a lodger and a boarder, she had agreed to it with delight. She was proud of helping her friend in his hour of need, and of saving him half of his usual expenses.

If Aunt Bella had been a less honest person, she might have had her suspicions aroused by the condition Doctor Holm added to their contract, that she should tell none of the details either to her brother Peter or to anybody else. "Schmitz does not understand anything about such matters," Holm had said, "and so it is better he should know nothing of our arrangements. He might think I was paying too dear for my rooms ; but I like them, and I am sure I have formerly given twice as much for rooms that were no better. Or he might think I paid too high board, and you say yourself you could do it cheaper ; but it would look to me like abject poverty if I could not at least afford paying so much for my meals, and so you may just as well indulge me in my illusion, even if you should by chance find a little

left over at the end of the month. If you sum it all up, I do not know but you may, after all, lose by the bargain. I shall be convinced that, if anything is amiss, I at least am not the sufferer."

Aunt Bella had never in her life told a falsehood, and believed Doctor Holm implicitly ; she was even slightly amazed at this glimpse of bachelor life, which she had always imagined as very expensive, but never as such a perfect "robbery" as it appeared to her now from Doctor Holm's statistics. How the good lady would have been amazed if she could have found out the deception by which she was victimized ! Her *protégé's* living often cost him less, but never more than it now did in River street ; and the whole was, of course, nothing but a pretext to assist Peter Schmitz in his embarrassment, in this harmless and yet very effective manner ! Aunt Bella, if she had ever discovered it, would no doubt have despaired of all that was sacred. She might actually have begun to doubt whether the escutcheon over the front door was truly and really the coat-of-arms of the Schmitz family.

And yet this faith in the former patrician splendor of her family was more than ever needed to uphold the poor lady, now that their star was sunk so very low. Thirty years ago, when her father, Anthon Schmitz, had fastened a sign with the words : "Writing Materials, etc., by Anthon Schmitz," over the windows of the basement, a small, curly-headed youth had stood by and said to himself : "That must come down again, or my name is not Peter Schmitz !" Now, the curly-headed youth was a gray-haired old man, and there was no one standing by him who in the full vigor of his youth could predict a better future !

It is true, Peter Schmitz was even now a man of more energy than his father had ever been in his life. Nor would he ever admit that their sad situation was more than a passing calamity. "We have let out all our steam, and must put up steam again before we can go on," he said ; or, "Pshaw ! what is it, after all ? Have you ever seen a beetle lying on its back ? Give him a hair that he can take hold of, and the fellow is on his legs again, before you are aware of it, and runs away, ever so fast." But these brave words and the pluck he still possessed did not keep the wrinkles from grow-

ing deeper and the bushy eye-brows from nearly meeting on his forehead ! Formerly he had never spoken of the old times ; now he often reverted to his strange old father, and to his troubles about the receipts for his ink, and to the miserable ink itself which he had made ; and above all, he spoke much of Margaret, not as she was now, worn out by disease, but of her whom he had loved so immensely, the wondrously beautiful girl with the soft dark eyes, who had made such a sad return for his love. It was especially with Ottilia that he loved to speak of those days. "It is all again as it was then," he used to say ; "the wheel has turned round, and here we are at the old place. An eccentric old man and a hearty love of a girl—only I want a boy for the girl, on whom I could vent my spleen. I wish I had such a boy ! Formerly I thought Wolfgang might become such a one, if his father should die, as I expected he would, and his mother should be left alone in the world with the child. But now the boy has become a great man—an officer, as his father was before him, only that he is clever enough to look for a wife among his own folks, and to eke out his miserable lieutenant's pay with the inheritance of the old man at Rheinfeld. To be sure, *that* the father would have accepted as readily, and his *mésalliance* he has long since bitterly regretted. The devil take all these Hohensteins ! They have been the curse of my life !"

"But, dearest uncle," said Ottilia ; "how unjust and how violent you are again ! Did you not tell me yourself that Wolfgang had behaved very well towards you the other day ? Have you forgotten that ?"

"Oh, pshaw !" said Uncle Peter, angrily ; "I did not forget it ; but he has forgotten it, or he would have looked in some day during these four weeks, to ask : 'How are you, uncle ? No bad consequences I hope ?' or some such question. He might have done that in spite of his lieutenant's uniform. I liked the boy so well ! It makes me furious to think that he too is going to be such a—quiet, Peter, quiet ! There I sit and talk, and have ever so much to do ! Good-by, girl ! In an hour I'll be back. Then you must play and sing a little for me ! You hear ? Good-by, child !"

CHAPTER XXVI.

UNCLE PETER left the room ; Ottilia remained sitting in the bay-window, and looked through the ivy-screen down upon the street, where evening began already to cast dark shadows. Although it was only the end of February, a soft breath like the breath of spring was already perceptible in the air ; the saffron-colored sky looked almost summerly, and shone quite brightly over the pointed gable-ends of the houses on the other side of the street. It was very quiet in the street ; only now and then the joyous cries of children at their play broke the silence. The young girl thought of the lines of the poet, which she loved to hum to herself :

“ Cheer up, my heart, be not afraid !
For all will change, all will be right ! ”

“ What is to change ? ” she said, smiling to herself. “ Am I not happier than I thought I could ever be again after poor papa’s death ? To be sure, poor uncle ! He has a hard time ; and it is bad enough that I must be an additional burden to him. But what can I do ? If I only allude to my wish to support myself by going into the world to work, he becomes so angry I dare not speak of it again ! I must see how I can make myself useful here in the house !

“ Well, that is one thing that would change. But what else could change ? What is that ‘ All ’ of which the verses speak—that ‘ all ’ which is to be changed by the mild spring air, that works and weaves in God’s nature. What is it ? Where is it ? Does it bloom afar off in secret valleys ? Does it bloom in the depths of my own heart ?

“ Ah ! It must be there ! why else should my heart beat so ? What do you want, poor beating heart ?

“ What do you want ? ”

“ Love ! ”

“ And do you not love ? Don’t you love that excellent man with the curly gray hair, and the severe eyes, which smile so sweetly whenever they glance at you ? Don’t you love dear, good aunty, who cares for her own with indefatigable tenderness ? Don’t you love that sweet pale lady in

Convent street, as you would have loved your own mother if she had not died so early? And do they not all love you far more than you deserve? What more do you want, restless heart?"

"Love!"

"Love? What love?"

"Love for a heart as young and as restless as my own; restless and yet strong—stronger than your own, which trembles at every breath; for a heart that beats in the bosom of a man!"

"Of a man! And how must he look whom you would love?—love with your whole heart, with your whole soul—to whom you could devote your life, every hour of your life, every beat of your heart, every thought of your soul? How must he be?"

"Clever and good. Clever, that I may respect him; and good, that I may not be afraid of him. Proud, bright eyes he ought to have, and a soft voice—like Wolfgang."

"Like Wolfgang?"

"If Wolfgang were my brother, I should have one person more to love, and he would love me too. Then he would not be so cruel as to be a whole month in town without coming to see his sister once. Then he would come every day, and I could talk to him about everything—about my music, about—ah! so many things I should like to know, and cannot talk of with uncle and aunty! What a life that would be! Like a sunny spring morning! And then we could take long walks together. Last summer, when we went into the mountains, I used to long for him. How glorious it must be to have somebody in whom you feel perfect confidence, to climb about with him all over the mountains, to rest on his strong arm, and to look down from the summit upon the green forests and the smiling valleys and the bright river! Ah! if he were only my brother."

"But would he love me then in the way I love him? Would he not love another girl more, and at last marry her and leave me alone again? And would not I be poorer then than I was before? And then I could not marry if I loved a brother, such a brother as Wolfgang, really with all my heart. I would do as poor Uncle Peter does, who still mourns every day of his life for his lost sister Margaret. Poor Aunt

Margaret! How long it is since I saw you! But it is really very wrong in Wolfgang that he does not come to see us! How could I summon courage to go there? Who knows how he thinks about me now? He did not even answer my letter! To be sure, it did not require an answer, but a few lines he might have written; it is so quickly done, and it would have given me such pleasure. No doubt he wrote often enough to his betrothed!"

"His betrothed! I wonder how she looks? They say she is very beautiful, and certainly she must be very clever too. Of course he would rather go there than come here. I wonder if she loves him very dearly? She is so rich and such a great lady, and has such an abundance of everything, and her whole life is one continuous holiday, I can hardly think how she can really love anybody very dearly. I wonder if she has her lonely, sad hours, as I have? It seems to me, she could not know what it is to be loved as one would like to be loved, if she had not her hours of sadness too."

Ottilia rested her head on her hands and looked up the street with that dreamy look which sees objects without perceiving them. Wolfgang was coming down the street just then, not in a dark coat as she had seen him last, but in his uniform, walking very rapidly and looking from afar already at the bay-window.

Ottilia rubbed her eyes to make sure that she was awake, but the scene was the same, only more distinct. "Is it possible? Wolfgang? And I am here quite alone? He will not come up though, I dare say!"

The young girl rose hastily from her seat and stepped from the window to the middle of the room. There she stood with beating heart, listening to hear if a step was coming up the stairs.

"No! He has gone by! God be thanked! But still, it is not handsome in him! He might have come for a moment."

And the staircase creaked, and a rapid step was heard on the gallery, and then a knock at the door.

"Come in!" Ottilia was going to say, but she could not utter the word, and another knock came. "Come in!" This time she succeeded—at least the chairs in the room might have heard it if they had had ears. Ottilia did not

wait for another knock, but advanced a few steps towards the door, and said a third time—quite bravely now—“Come in !”

“Good evening ! Good evening, cousin !” said Wolfgang, hastily approaching her and shaking hands. “Are you quite alone ?” he asked then, glancing around in the half-dark room.

“Uncle is gone out, but he’ll be back soon. Aunt, I think, is in the kitchen. I’ll call her !”

“No, no ! Never mind her ! I am very glad I can see you for a moment alone, before uncle comes in.”

“Shall I light the lamp ?”

“Why ? It is quite light yet ! Let us sit down in the window. There ! First of all, much love from mamma ; she asks why you never come to see her now ?”

“How is Aunt Margaret ?” said Ottilia, evasively.

“A little better to-day, but she has been quite sick during the last week. She is so anxious to get out into the fresh air ; I wish spring would come.”

“So do I !” said Ottilia. “I was just thinking of it. It is nearly a year now since I came to town. How long it is !”

Wolfgang’s eyes rested on the slender form of the girl, as she sat with her face half turned away from him. He noticed, for the first time, how beautiful the outlines of her head, and how gracefully the brown curls fell in rich abundance around the well-shaped neck, flowing in rich waves down upon the round-sloping shoulders.

“And I have seen you only twice during that whole time !” he said.

“But you have been away for nine months. No wonder !”

“I might have come oftener.”

“You ought to make up for it now.”

“Can we make up for lost time ?” said Wolfgang. “A lost day is lost for all eternity. I often think of that with heavy heart.”

“All will change,” said Ottilia.

“Do you think so ?”

“There is aunt coming !” cried Ottilia, rising quickly and going to meet Aunt Bella, who entered the room with a large flat basket, in which she kept her embroidery.

"What is it?" asked Aunt Bella, in a sharp voice.

Aunt Bella's voice was always sharp, as long as she was face to face to something unknown, whether it was a thing or a person; for she acted upon the orders given to watchful outposts, to consider everything that came in sight as an "enemy," and to treat it accordingly, till it had proved itself to be a "friend." She had noticed the outlines of a man in uniform near the window. The man in uniform was either a policeman or a tax-gatherer.

"It is I, Aunt Bella," said Wolfgang, coming out of the bay-window.

Aunt Bella uttered a cry and dropped the work-basket.

"Did not I say so?" she cried. "I dreamt you were coming to-day!"

As the excited tone in which Aunt Bella said these words by no means indicated whether the dream was in her estimation a good or a bad one, Wolfgang considered it the best policy to say at once:

"I am ready to go, aunt, if my presence is unpleasant to you."

"Ah!" said Aunt Bella, "you are going again? Why did you come if you meant to go so soon? You——"

"Good-by, dear aunt!" said Wolfgang, in a friendly but decided tone.

Wolfgang had to pass Aunt Bella in order to get to the door.

"Wolfgang!" exclaimed the old lady, when he was quite near her.

Her love had triumphed over her resentment. With stormy cordiality she threw herself into Wolfgang's arms, kissed him amid hot tears, and sobbed: "Don't be angry, Wolfgang! I love you dearly, dearly, and cannot bear to see you turn away from us!"

"Dear aunt——"

"Yes, I know all is not dead in your heart yet, and you were very kind to my brother the other day! You dear, good boy! Did I not tell you, Ottilia?"

But Ottilia had quietly slipped away when she saw that the meeting between Wolfgang and her aunt took a happy turn, and Aunt Bella profited by the opportunity to take Wolfgang into her confidence. She drew him down by her on the

sofa, and repeated to him, amid occasional showers of tears, the whole history of the Schmitz family since Ottilia's arrival last spring—a mournful story, which appeared doubly sad in Aunt Bella's melancholy mirror.

“And now, just think, Wolfgang,” she said, concluding her eloquent account, “what is to become of us if brother should suddenly die? He says, to be sure, he does not mean to die yet, but such godless speeches are the very thing to bring it about. As if all the Schmitzes, as long as the family has been in existence, had not died suddenly! Our grandfather was perfectly well and stone dead within twenty-four hours; our father smoked his pipe on the morning of the day on which he died; Brother Eugene—I cannot think of that. And so Brother Peter also will be carried off before we are aware of it. And what will become of us, Wolfgang? I am sure he is even now thinking of some great enterprise; then come the creditors; the inventory is sold, the furniture is sold, the house is sold, and Ottilia and I will have to beg for bread! I won't survive the misery long, I know; but the poor dear child, who has no one on earth—no father and no mother, no uncle and no aunt, no brothers nor sisters! I often awake at night with horror when I see her in my dreams walking barefooted on the highroad, and could cry myself dead with grief and sorrow. Ah! Wolfgang, the man who would relieve me of that anxiety, I could worship like a saint!”

“But, dear aunt,” said Wolfgang, “are you not troubling yourself unnecessarily? Uncle is as active as I ever saw him; and even if your evil prophecy should come true, am I not there?—or do you really give me up so completely that you think I could abandon you in your misfortune?”

Aunt Bella dried her tears, which had been flowing copiously during the latter part of her speech, and said:

“No, Wolfgang, I do not think so badly of you, nor do I doubt your good-will; but you will not be able to do as you choose. Your father's relations will not permit you to take care of us; and when you are married, do you think your wife will let you look upon Ottilia as upon a sister? You know the Hohensteins—well, Wolfgang, you need not be angry, but what we cannot comprehend remains a mystery to us forever, like the Chinese wall—and thus I cannot get

reconciled to your engagement, and never shall be, were I as old as Methuselah. You see, Wolfgang—I mean to deal candidly with you—this marriage is no happiness for you ; you will see it yourself one of these days. I do not know your betrothed ; I will admit that she is neither false, nor cold, nor vain ; that she is as good as a girl can be who has grown up amid such surroundings. But, Wolfgang, that is not enough for you. I know you from your childhood, and know what an affectionate heart you have, and that you have a Schmitz heart, although your father may be ten times a Hohenstein, and a Schmitz heart is not content with ordinary love. It wants more, I tell you ; it wants more ; it wants to be loved altogether and for evermore ; and when it finds that it does not get such love, it breaks, Wolfgang. And if it does not break, it is so miserably wretched that death would be a hundred thousand times better than life. I could tell you a story about that, Wolfgang, how a Schmitz heart feels if it is not loved as it wants to be loved ; and if you are not willing to believe me, you can ask your old uncle, who has become an old bachelor because he took it into his head that he must live for his sister, to make her rich and happy ! Or, Wolfgang, ask your mother if she has been happy since she left the house in River street, or if her whole life has not been one unbroken home-sickness ? ”

Aunt Bella paused, and Wolfgang found no reply to words which sounded as if they had come from his own heart. It was almost dark in the room ; the old hall-clock was ticking monotonously and as soberly as when Wolfgang had played, a little child, here and on the gallery, and had listened to its solemn tic-tac from his hiding-place under the table-cover. He felt as if the old times had come back again ; as if all he had experienced since, had only been a dream ; as if he could live his whole life over once more in the spirit of truth and love, which had ever breathed upon him in these rooms.

“ An angel flying through the room ! ” said Aunt Bella.

A light fell through the open door which led to Aunt Bella’s room, and immediately afterwards Ottilia stood on the threshold, with a lamp in her hand.

“ Don’t you want light ? ” she asked.

“ You ? ” asked Aunt Bella, passing her handkerchief over

her eyes ; “ will *you* have no light ? Really it is quite dark here, and I have so much to do to-night ! Just think, Wolfgang, what a mess I am in ! The ladies in this neighborhood must needs take it into their head to embroider a rug for St. Bridget, and ask me if I will join them ? Of course I said yes ! At first there were six of us ; but now one is married, another has left town, the third is sick, the fourth has given it up, the fifth—what was the matter with the fifth ?—in fine I am left quite alone, and how on earth am I to do the whole work ? ”

While Aunt Bella recited this ingenious fable with many blushes and much clearing of throat, she had taken the half-finished rug on her lap. The enormous dimensions of it gave a most criminal aspect to the wickedness of the five mysterious ladies ! Then Aunt Bella placed her work-basket on a chair by her side, took her light-blue spectacles out of their cover, breathed upon them, rubbed them, held them up to the light, and finally adjusted them carefully on her nose.

“ I find it rather difficult to see colors at night,” she said, “ and if it were not for the little one, who selects the shades for me, I should not be able to get on at all.”

Ottilia sat on a low stool at her aunt’s feet, busily at work on one of the corners of the gigantic rug. The light from the old-fashioned lamp was just strong enough to show the embroidery and the busy hands, but the faces were in a dim twilight ; and only at times, when they bent forward, they entered the bright circle. Wolfgang could not cease looking at the two faces, so different in age and form and expression, and yet harmonizing so well with each other. It was a charming picture, as he saw it from his cosy corner on the sofa. Aunt Bella, her spectacles low down on the tip of her nose, was bending over to examine with her dark, sharp eyes, the work of little one, who was probably embroidering after her fancy instead of after the pattern ! while Ottilia, raising her face, assured her with a lovely smile, that “ all was perfectly right.” The anxious care of old age and the self-confident courage of youth were here personified. And what life there was in these faces ! what playful changes in their features ! and, above all, what zeal in their work ! This was no busy idleness—no one could mistake it for that ; this

was work ! work which must be finished at the appointed time, unless the firm of Mary Blad & Co. was to be entitled to make a heavy deduction from the pitiful wages. And poor Aunt Bella, who had so boldly undertaken the work of five other ladies from the neighborhood of St. Bridget's, found it evidently very difficult to distinguish the shades and even the embroidery itself. Her needle by no means always hit the right place ; and it was very clear that without the cunning fingers of the younger lady, which carried the needle from place to place with great ease and rapidity, St. Bridget's altar would have had to wait a long time yet for its ornament.

How different was this picture from another which Wolfgang had so often watched of late ! There, in a brilliant salon, the double lamp from the ceiling had shone upon a costly table, near which his future mother-in-law rested comfortably in swelling velvet cushions, her fat white hands lazily playing with the silken ears of her pet dog. The young ladies had some work in their hands, but it seemed a mere pretext, for they hardly touched it, jumping up at every moment to look for a photograph in the album or to bang a few bars on the piano, or to call out : " Ah, Kettenberg, come here and draw me this ! I cannot do it ! "

Wolfgang felt sick as he recalled it ; he rose from the sofa.

" You are not going, Wolfgang ? " said Aunt Bella, looking over her spectacles.

" It is getting late, " said Wolfgang.

" Oh, pshaw ! " replied Aunt Bella.

" Perhaps Wolfgang is expected elsewhere ! " added Ottilia.

Suddenly a heavy step was heard on the gallery, accompanied by the fierce stamping of a heavy cane.

" Uncle and the doctor ! " cried Ottilia, rising hastily to open the door.

" Good evening, gentlemen ! "

" Greeting to you, most lovely of maidens ! " said Doctor Holm, and then, perceiving Wolfgang, he continued without interruption, " and to you in the armor shining in glorious panoply ! Truly I wonder at all this. For if I err not, the fates have held you a sorrowful captive ! You too, oh bel-

lissima aunt! be greeted with fervor. Let me, I pray, sit down by the fire, enjoying your converse!"

"Will you take a chair?" said Aunt Bella.

"Well then, lead him, the stranger, to seats embossed with silver!" said Holm, sinking comfortably into the sofa corner, from which Wolfgang had risen to greet his uncle.

Uncle Peter had not forgotten the last meeting with his nephew here in this room, now about a year ago, and the remembrance of his unkindness then, contributed not a little to his greater cordiality now.

"You have kept me waiting long," he said, heartily shaking hands with the young man, "before you would give me an opportunity to thank you for your services the other day. I have been sincerely grateful to you for a sacrifice which would do no good to our cause, and might have been very ill advised. How is your mother?"

Uncle Peter began to walk up and down the room with Wolfgang by his side. The latter had to tell him all about his mother, and Uncle Peter's face became very sober when he heard how much worse she had been of late. He passed his hand across his face and said: "I shall call to-morrow to see her. I have not been in your house these ten years, but who knows how much longer your mother and I may be together on this earth; and beyond the grave——"

Uncle Peter saw that these words made a very painful impression on Wolfgang, and he broke off, therefore, at once, and entered upon politics. He looked upon the condition of things as almost desperate. The state of siege prevailing in all the great cities, the disarming of the people at large, their discouragement and want of self-reliance—all these seemed to him to make a revolution hopeless. "I speak of those things," he continued, "on purpose to you. You know that I used to be one of Munzer's most intimate friends, and I owe you therefore almost an apology for my present hostility. Munzer has left the party to which he formerly belonged, the party of liberty and German unity. He wants to make of the German movement a European, a universal revolution. I am credibly informed that he is in league with French, Italian, and Slavonic republicans; and I am well convinced that if he should succeed, chaos and anarchy would come upon us, but not German unity. In like

manner he has abandoned our views on political economy : he preaches extreme socialism. But I might pardon all that, for after all he has a right to his views. But he is not even consistent in what I consider his errors. He has been guilty of the most extraordinary and sudden changes ever since he returned from the convention in Berlin ; it really looks at times as if he were possessed by a demon, who drives him into the maddest extravagancies. Thus he no longer belongs to a party, but must be judged before the great forum of general morality ; and while I could forgive Munzer the politician because he differs from me, I cannot esteem Munzer the immoral socialist any longer. I have long refused to credit the reports which are circulating in town about his unhappy married life, and have often scolded the women when they dinned them in my ears ; but I confess I believe they are true now. He himself has done so much to give them an air of plausibility : his separation from his wife, perfectly inexplicable, now that he has been at home for two months ; his intimacy with your father's sister-in-law, an intimacy which certainly looks strange in a republican of extreme views, such as Munzer professes ; his intercourse with Major Degenfeld, who is an arch-aristocrat, in spite of his revolutionary or Napoleonistic principles, which appear very clearly in many places of his book. The aristocrats say, *noblesse oblige* ; and I say, republicanism also has its obligations, and ought also to consider appearances. The man who wants to be a tribune of the people, must be such from head to foot, and down to the innermost recesses of his heart. The bow that is to hit the bull's eye, must come from thoroughly sound wood—what is it, little one ? ”

“Aunty begs you will come to table,” said Ottilia, pointing at a table in the background of the room, where she had in the meantime set out a modest supper, quickly and noiselessly.

“Come, my girl,” said Uncle Peter, gallantly offering Ottilia his arm. “Come Wolfgang, it is a long time since we had a bottle of wine together.”

Wolfgang followed them to the table, where Aunt Bella was already seated. The fare justified, in spite of its Spartan simplicity, Doctor Holm's enthusiastic praise, and even a bottle of good wine was not wanting—the last but one, as

Aunt Bella remarked with a sigh from her heart. Doctor Holm was in his glory, and Aunt Bella seemed to have laid up a stock of witty retorts, for she gave him unfailingly as good as he sent. Uncle Peter played the attentive host to perfection, and sent, in spite of Aunt Bella's terrific frowns, for the last bottle also. "I mean to enjoy myself once more," he said, "or rather I do not mean to do it—I do it. I feel as if the last twenty or twenty-five years were wiped out of the book of my life, and as if I had the blank pages once more before me. I stand, you know, just where I stood then—and is not almost everything again exactly as it was then? Do you remember, Holm, the first evening after your return from Rome? We were sitting here at the same place at this same table: you, my sister Margaret, your father, Wolfgang, who had just become engaged to Margaret, and—yes, Bella, you happened to be here also, that evening. My head was full of projects—just as it is now, Bella; you, Holm, were full of Italian reminiscences, and told us in magnificent hexameters and pentameters the elegiac love affair with the Roman countess; Aunt Bella was sentimental at first, and then as cheerful as she can be, and as she would always be if she only knew how becoming it is to her; and the two lovers were just as silent as our young people are to-night. I thought, that evening, it would always be so. Well, we cannot see all our wishes fulfilled, and yet even that wish has been fulfilled. Holm and I, at least, we have remained good friends; Bella and I begin at last to get used to each other; and if we only substitute the son for the father, and the curly head there for Margaret—all is very nearly still as it was then. Fill your glasses, children! we'll drink the old ones, that they may remain young; and the young ones, that they may follow their example!"

The glasses clinked, and Holm delivered a speech in hexameters, but Wolfgang did not hear much of it. The innocent cheerfulness of these people affected him like a reproach. They could be cheerful! They had nothing to reproach themselves with; their whole life lay before them as clear and bright as their eyes; they had never said yes, when they thought no in their hearts.

An increasing restlessness took hold of the young man. He felt as if in the midst of this merry, laughing company,

some great misfortune must fall upon him ; and he started when the maid entered and said the lieutenant's servant was at the door with a message for his master. His heart beat convulsively as he went out. A glance at the face of the kind-hearted man told him that he had bad news for him.

"What is it?"

"A note, sir, from the alderman."

With trembling hand Wolfgang opened the note and read by the faint light of the hall-lamp: "Come home immediately, Wolfgang. Your mother is ill.—Your unhappy father."

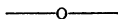
"Where are you going?" asked Uncle Peter, who had followed him.

"Mamma is ill ——"

"I'll go too—one moment! I will only leave word."

Uncle Peter went back into the room and told them as calmly as he could what he had heard. "It is probably nothing serious, but I think I had better go too. I'll feel better, and so will you."

A moment later the two men were in the street, and hurried through the night. Neither of them said a word. Why should they deceive themselves by hopes which they did not entertain.



CHAPTER XXVII.

"**G**OD be thanked that you come at last!" said the alderman, when Wolfgang and Uncle Peter entered the parlor.

He had been sitting at a round table which stood in the centre of the room, and now rose to welcome the two, but he sank back into his chair, hiding his face in his trembling hands.

Wolfgang walked up to him and put his hand on his shoulder.

"Mother is dead, father?"

"No! But she suffers so terribly, I cannot bear to see it."

The unhappy man looked completely broken down. The

sight of Uncle Peter, who had not crossed his threshold for ten years, had made no impression upon him.

"Be a man, Brother Arthur!" said Uncle Peter; "let us bear jointly what is too much to bear alone."

The alderman raised his face, disfigured by pain, and looked at his brother-in-law with wondering eyes.

"She was very dear to you!" he said.

"God knows!" sighed Uncle Peter.

Wolfgang had gone into the chamber where his mother was lying. The few hours since he had seen her last, had changed her fearfully. Young Dr. Brand, who had been called in at Wolfgang's request, instead of old Dr. Snepper, sat by her bedside. He took Wolfgang, as he stared in despairing silence at the rigid features, and drew him gently to some little distance from the bed, saying:

"You are prepared for the worst, Baron Hohenstein?"

"Yes!"

"You ought to be. Your dear mother will not survive this night."

"Will she suffer much?"

"She is most of the time unconscious. I do what I can. You may rely on that."

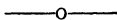
Wolfgang pressed the doctor's hand and went out to tell Uncle Peter.

It was a sad, long night—a night in which minutes become years, years full of intolerable suffering—a night, the terrors of which ought to wash all our sins out of the book of life—a night in which man is apt to ask, if it was not bitter mockery to let him be born, if he was destined to suffer such agony.

Uncle Peter sat not far from the bed, supporting his prematurely gray head in his hand—silent, noiseless, like an Indian bound to the stake, who will not let his enemies have the gratification of seeing him move a muscle. Only once, when Margaret in her wanderings began to speak of the old house in River street and of Brother Peter, who had always been so very kind to her, who had loved her so dearly, and whom she had repaid so sadly for his love—only then Uncle Peter rose softly, went into the darkest corner of the room, and wept like a child.

It was a sad, long night.

When the gray morning light was stealing in through the curtains, Margaret bent her head on one side ; her features, torn and racked with pain, assumed an expression of mild, sorrowful solemnity. The goal of her long, painful pilgrimage was reached. A few deep low breathings . . . the burden of life fell from her oppressed bosom—forever ! forever !



CHAPTER XXVIII.

A DISMAL, damp day was breaking upon the deserted streets, flooded by a long rain. The wind was tearing fiercely through the tall old trees opposite, behind the convent wall, so that the mighty branches groaned and moaned, and the little twigs knocked against each other as if in mad terror. From time to time the low black clouds poured down a heavy torrent of rain, and the big drops beat against the windows like hailstones.

Wolfgang thought it was madness to bury his mother on such a morning—his gentle, delicate mother, who had loved the light of the sun like a pleasing deity, and who had held sweet intercourse with the singing birds slipping through the dense branches of the trees, as with her equals. This breast that could not breath freely except in the soft, warm air of the garden, was to be shut up in the narrow house of boards, and that last house to be sunk into the cold, wet ground, upon which the heavens were pouring down floods of wintry rain !

Who is more barbarous now ? Nature, which exposes her most glorious offspring to wretched destruction ? or man, who adorns even the mantle of death with black crape and black ribbons ? And the horror of being unable to mourn in solitude ! To have to drag the fragments of society after you, in these hours when we stand face to face with the beginning and the end of our existence ! Miserable humanity, which always stops at the surface of things, and crowds into a house of mourning, as into a concert-room, to be saddened

and moved here, as they are amused there. Ah, much rather would I be alone with the precious remains, utterly alone, on a lonely heath ! Rather would I dig you a grave with my own hands ; and when they had buried you, I would feel as if you were resting more easily under the dark earth !

Wolfgang pressed his burning forehead against the cold panes. A hand was laid gently on his shoulder. Ottilia stood behind him.

“Wolfgang ! Poor Wolfgang !”

Not a tear had yet come to the young man’s eyes during all these fearful days. The well of soothing tears seemed to have dried up. But when he looked upon this dear, sweet girl’s face, endeavoring to appear composed, and yet trembling unconsciously in every feature, while the big drops were rolling down, one by one, from the beautiful blue eyes over the smooth, pale cheeks—then—when he saw his own great grief embodied, as it were, in so touching a form, then the anguish gave way, which had been locked up in his bosom so long, and he broke out in tears. He extended his hand to Ottilia ; she seized it, and pressed it for a moment to her heart.

“I should like to see her once more,” she said in a whisper.

“Come !”

Wolfgang led the young girl into the adjoining room, where Margaret was lying in an open coffin. There was no one else in the room. The two stepped up to the coffin, hand in hand, and looked long at the pale face of the departed, beautiful as a fair spirit.

“Do you recollect what she said,” whispered Wolfgang to Ottilia, “on that evening when we were standing, as now, by her bedside, and she had looked at us for some time with her bright, expressive eyes ?”

“Yes,” whispered Ottilia.

“She said : Now I have two children ! Ottilia, will you be my sister ?”

“I will,” whispered Ottilia, bending down upon the face of the departed to seal the newly-formed alliance by a kiss upon the beloved lips which had loved so much to mention her name and Wolfgang’s name together.

"Now go, dear one," said Wolfgang, gently leading the weeping girl from the room.

He himself remained. He had heard several carriages drive up before the house. The moment when the coffin would be closed forever, was near. He remained to watch that no rude hand should touch his saint. He whom she had borne into the light of this world, he would surrender her to eternal night.

In the meantime the rooms on the other side of the house, which the alderman occupied, had gradually filled up with gentlemen, mostly the alderman's colleagues: Heydman & Co., and other intimate friends; fat Chief Burgomaster Dasch also was there, and trying in vain to arrange his full, shining face in becoming sobriety of mourning, while he endeavored to convince the alderman that all men must die. The latter sat, perfectly overcome, in the furthest corner of the room. The president and Colonel Hohenstein stood in one of the windows, conversing eagerly, probably about Peter Schmitz, who stood in the other window, turning his back to the entire company and drumming softly with his fingers upon the panes. Poor Peter Schmitz was in a desperate frame of mind. He had already repented bitterly that he had not quietly staid at home, as he had at first intended. What was the use of his being here among these men who had never cared in the least for his poor Margaret, and who had yet contributed so much to her misery through life? But to leave the field to them now, when they had all seen him—that was out of question, especially on account of his ladies, who relied upon him for protection, or at least because his sister Bella would never have pardoned him if he had left her alone in this "wasp's nest," as she called it.

Aunt Bella had remained in the house since the morning on which Margaret died; Wolfgang had wished it so. With her sharp Schmitz eye, into which the consciousness of her duty "to keep her head clear" had allowed no tears to rise except on rare occasions, she had looked "after rights." As the alderman, in his utter apathy, troubled himself about nothing, she had made all the necessary arrangements, and thus relieved poor Wolfgang of a heavy burden. This morning also she had come up early, taking care that Wolfgang should be left alone as much as possible.

"Just let me do it, Wolf," she said; "don't you trouble yourself about anything. I'll attend to everything that is needful; and if the ladies should come, which however I do not think at all likely, I will receive them in your name. Just go up, poor Wolf!"

All who knew the horror Aunt Bella had of "the ladies," would have appreciated the heroic courage with which she offered to show the hated visitors, if not a really kind face, at least not one expressing her true feelings. It was the greatest sacrifice Aunt Bella could offer to Wolfgang. She was determined to bridle her proud heart, and in this resolute state of mind she went to receive the ladies, who arrived at the same moment when Ottilia, who had come with Uncle Peter, had left the room.

Unfortunately the "ladies" were in that frame of mind which leads so easily to conflicts, and makes them so readily assume a hostile character. The unusually early hour and the uncommonly bad weather had no doubt their share in this bad humor; but Wolfgang's conduct during the last day had probably contributed far more largely. Wolfgang had not only not shown himself, but he had written that he felt unable to accept his future mother's invitation to seek in her quiet and comfortable salon harmless and yet beneficent distraction. The lady was indignant; the colonel's wife thought Wolfgang's conduct abominable; even Aurelia, who generally took his part, said it looked as if he were treating them rather *cavalièrement*. Only Miss Camilla abstained, according to her usual policy in such cases, from all remarks—from "delicacy," as her mother said, from "indifference," as Aurelia called it.

Aunt Bella made her stately courtesy as the ladies entered the room, and welcomed them in a tone which might have been called a friendly tone, considering the state of her mind.

"It seems you are doing the honors here, my dear," said the colonel's wife, who, as a former Countess Duren-Lilienfeld, thought it highly improper to be received by a person whom she did not know, and who was in all probability one of Wolfgang's low relatives.

"If you permit me to comply with Wolfgang's desire, yes," replied Aunt Bella. "Will you take seats?"

"I prefer standing," said the president's wife.

"As you like it!" said Aunt Bella.

"With whom may I have the honor?" asked the colonel's wife, evidently irritated by Aunt Bella's composure.

"Will you permit me to return the question?" said Aunt Bella.

"My name is Selma, Baroness Hohenstein."

"I am Miss Arabella Schmitz," replied Bella, rising to her full height.

"I confess, the conduct of your betrothed begins to be inexplicable to me," said the colonel's wife to Camilla, turning her back on Aunt Bella.

Camilla shrugged her shoulders.

"You have probably never buried a mother?" said Aunt Bella, who could not prevent herself from making a reply to Selma's remark.

"I spoke to Lieutenant Hohenstein's betrothed," said the colonel's wife, sharply.

"I only wished to show my astonishment that my nephew's betrothed should not have a word to reply to a remark which accuses Wolfgang of impropriety of conduct."

"You surely do not seem to lack words."

"God be thanked, no!"

Ottilia's entrance interrupted this discussion. Ottilia did not know that there was anybody else besides Aunt Bella in the room. She would have avoided coming in just then, returning in the most painful excitement, with eyes all red from weeping from the coffin of the beloved departed. Aunt Bella saw it all at a glance. She also saw how the Hohenstein ladies examined Ottilia's appearance with that haughty look, *de haut en bas*, which only very well bred young ladies of rank know how to assume. The president's wife had actually to use her glasses, while Selma stared at a painting on the wall, in order to avoid returning the confused salutation of the blushing girl.

Aunt Bella beckoned to Ottilia and said:

"Will you get ready, child? And warm my cloak in the kitchen. Please do it yourself."

"Why do you send the girl away?" asked the president's wife.

"To spare her being any longer exposed to the unkind looks of the company present."

"We had better have stayed at home, *mes enfants* !" said the president's wife.

"God knows you had better !" said Aunt Bella, advancing a step and facing the four Hohenstein ladies. "Why did you come? Surely not from love for the departed, for you have despised and mortified her all her life. Yes, my fair young ladies, turn up your noses! Yes, baroness, look at me as grimly as you choose! It does not hurt me! I have a harder head than poor Margaret had, else she would have told you what I tell you now. She would have told you: 'Leave me alone with your hypocritical friendship, which vexes me more than if you were to show me your true faces! Leave me in peace! I do not accuse you, although you have been the curse of my life. I do not hate you, although you have robbed me of what I held dearest on earth! I ask for nothing but for peace in life and peace in the grave! peace from you, the proud, haughty, hard-hearted!' Yes, my fair ladies! That is what she would have said—but she dared not. And that is why I say it in her name, in the name of my poor, unhappy Margaret. And now you may go and denounce me to my brother-in-law or my nephew, as you choose. I do not mind it!"

And Aunt Bella cast one more fiery glance at the ladies, which they might divide out among themselves, and swept out of the room.

"The person is mad!" said the president's wife.

"No, but we are so, to submit to it," said the colonel's wife.

"Yes, but what can we do?" asked the former.

The ladies had not time to form any resolution, for the funeral procession left the house.

The coffin had been lowered into the grave; the numerous company had left the graveyard; even the workmen had gone away, for the rain had commenced again most violently. Only the hearse was still there; the driver did not seem to be in a hurry; he busied himself leisurely with the traces, which seemed to have gotten out of order in some way or other. But when he saw that he was quite alone in the graveyard, he

went up to the grave, took off his hat, and said : " Good lady, sainted lady, pray for me ! pray for old Moss ! " The old man stood there for some time, absorbed in earnest prayer. Then he pulled out his cotton handkerchief, wiped the tears and the rain from his face, put his hat on again, and drove slowly back to town.

PART THIRD.

CHAPTER I.

TOWARDS noon of the same day a scene had taken place in the salon of the president which showed clearly how necessary it was to have that sanctuary closely screened by its thick doors and heavy curtains from the outer world. Miss Camilla and Miss Aurelia had had a great quarrel ; the mother had in vain tried to pacify the combatants ; and Joli, the lap-dog, who wanted to take his part in the family imbroglio, had barked so loud that the president could not stand it in his private room, and had come in to inquire what was the matter. As all three of the ladies spoke at once, and Joli, who seemed to enjoy the scene uncommonly, was still barking as loud as he could, it was not so easy for the president to ascertain the cause of the dispute. At last the noise subsided. Joli jumped by a great effort upon a velvet cushion and rolled himself up comfortably for a nap, as if he knew by heart what was coming next. And indeed it was an old story which the president was now told by the three ladies.

Aurelia had accused Camilla of coquetting with Baron Willamowski exactly as if she had not been engaged, and Camilla had replied that that was no concern of Aurelia's, as far as she could see. Aurelia had rejoined that it was her concern, because she had no idea of becoming an old maid, and yet that would be her fate if Camilla continued to flirt

with every gentleman who came into the house. The little spring, bubbling over with teazings, had at last grown into a flood of hard speeches and bitter tears, until the swelling waves had actually overflowed into the president's private room.

The latter was just about to open his lips in order to begin his usual, "But, children ——" when Aurelia anticipated him.

"I know all you mean to say, papa!" she cried; "and as I am to be in the wrong as a matter of course, I do not see why I am to be scolded in the presence of my younger sister."

And Aurelia tossed her head with an air which was very unlike filial reverence, and left the room, banging the door by no means gently.

"Very pretty in Miss Aurelia," said Camilla, following the fugitive with a scornful look.

"But you ought really to be a little more careful!" said the president, with a gentle, reproachful voice.

"Ah!" said Camilla. "Am I now to get the scolding that Aurelia was to have received? I am much obliged!"

And the young lady went out at the other door, with an air and a carriage in comparison with which that of Aurelia might have been called very modest and well behaved.

The happy parents looked at each other, sadly embarrassed.

"I fear we have spoiled the children a little," said the president.

"But you were too unkind in scolding the poor child."

"I should like to see the day when you will sustain me against the children."

"When you are wrong, I cannot say you are right."

Joli looked up from his soft couch to see if it was worth while to take part in the new dispute. But as he saw nobody in the room but his mistress and the president, he did not think the matter sufficiently important, and put his head once more between his fore legs.

"But, *ma chère*," said the president in his softest tone, "who has encouraged and at last accomplished this marriage with Wolfgang—which is after all at the bottom of the whole trouble—if it was not you? I cannot help it, I am

sure, if Camilla does not like Wolfgang. If you had left the youth where he was, you would not have been exposed this morning to the insolence of that Miss Schmitz, and Camilla might have married Willamowski whenever she chose."

As the good lady knew that her husband's reasoning was in reality irrefutable, she had of course nothing left her but to sink into the sofa corner, put her handkerchief before her face and burst into tears.

Joli probably knew this scene also, for he simply wagged his long, cunning ears gently, without raising his head.

The president, who was overwhelmed with business, but who knew from long experience that as a matter of prudence he ought not to return to his private room without having first made his peace with his wife, employed all his powers of persuasion to attain the desired end as soon as possible, and at last he carried his gallantry so far as to let himself down—not without some trouble—on his knees before the weeping beauty.

At that moment a noise was heard, which was neither a cough nor a hoarse laugh, and yet sounded like both. The president rose to his feet much faster than he had sunk on his knees.

"There is no end to love!" squeaked the new-comer. "The sweetest illustration of that great word which my eyes have ever seen!"

"Ah, *mon cher ami*, how are you?" said the president, shaking hands most cordially with the physician. "But you always come most wonderfully *à propos*! We were just speaking of you. Accept my very heartiest congratulations, Doctor *Von Snepper*!"

"And mine!" added the lady, offering him her fat white hands.

"Thanks! many thanks!" said the doctor, pressing the fat hands repeatedly to his thin lips. "I must admit, I am touched and rejoiced both; my sovereign has been very gracious."

"Well, my dear colleague, *entre nous*, you have worked hard enough for it," said the president. "The activity you showed in March and during the present election, was astounding. It is due to you alone that Munzer has not

been reëlected; for, of course, I do not believe that the red republicans would like to make out now that he did not desire a reëlection."

"Maybe, Mr. President!" said the little man, taking his pinch and then sitting down on a chair, with the gold snuff-box gliding swiftly through his fingers to and fro; "but they might have given me a decoration merely, or a title—but to ennoble me! You must confess that was more than you had expected!"

"Well," said the president, smiling; "I thought I heard from the very best authority, that when the government sent to inquire in what form you would prefer the reward, you yourself——"

"All right! all right! we understand each other!" smiled the little man. "Was it not perfectly natural?"

"Certainly," replied the president; "but, my dear colleague, as I was saying, you come exactly *à propos*. You know—the old story—Camilla becomes more and more unmanageable, and—I grant you that, dear Clotilda—her betrothed shows in her relations to her such a peculiar reserve—to express it mildly—that I can hardly blame the girl if her old fondness for Willamowski is coming back again."

"But why this Willamowski, and always again this Willamowski?" cried the new nobleman with such vehemence, that Joli, half asleep as he was, began to growl.

Father and mother looked at each other in astonishment.

"Pardon me," said the doctor, "if I allow my warm interest in you and your children to carry me too far; but, to tell the truth, I cannot understand how one can hold such an excellent hand and play so badly. Why do you not distribute the admirers of your daughters equally, instead of giving them all to Camilla? Willamowski is a very tolerable match, now that he has fallen heir to his great aunt's fortune. I tell you the baron is going to settle down; he knows he cannot go on long at the rate at which he now lives. He means to marry *à tout prix*, and I am sure, under these circumstances, he'll take Aurelia just as lief as Camilla. Aurelia is heartily tired of playing the second part always, or rather of being overlooked altogether, and she also wants to marry *à tout prix*. There is nothing easier in the world than to bring those two together. If Willamowski recovers

his health—*bon !* then you have a tolerably rich and very pliable and obedient son-in-law ; if he does not recover—well ! if he does not recover, the young widow will find in a fortune, which for herself alone is very considerable, sufficient consolation for her loss ! ”

Father and mother looked at each other again, but this time with a certain well-pleased surprise.

“ Not so bad ! Not so bad ! ” said the president ; “ and Camilla and Wolfgang ? ”

The little man said : “ Ahem ! ” took another pinch, and dusted his cuffs industriously as if some grains of snuff had fallen on them, while he said :

“ I have adhered in this whole matter from the beginning to a plan which has come out more clearly and proved more correct as the matter has advanced. There were two points to be considered ; first : Camilla must be the general’s heir ; secondly : Wolfgang must fetch the roasted chestnuts out of the fire ; and when all is secured, he has to be dropped. As a matter of necessity, we had to agree to his excellency’s notion ; but of course not in good earnest, only for the sake of appearances and until he had become perfectly familiar with the idea that Camilla and Wolfgang were to be his only heirs. Then nothing more was to be done but to remove Wolfgang, willingly if he proved yielding, by force if it must be ; so that Camilla was to remain the only heir.

“ Now you see how nearly we have achieved this already. If I am not mistaken in the youth, he is even now ready to give back Camilla’s word. That would be right and proper enough ; but we must inform the old general of Wolfgang’s refusal to marry Camilla at a moment when he has already been deeply offended and insulted by the young man. Fortunately Fate has provided for this also. The young man is tired of the army, I tell you. He will soon not be able to stand it any longer, and then comes our time. Then you, Mrs. President, with your admirable skill in such matters, must arrange a scene—and we are rid of him, you may rely on it.”

Father and mother looked at each other once more with joyous surprise, but this time a slight feeling of doubt seemed to be mixed up with it.

"Is not that a rather hazardous game?" asked the president.

"Faint heart never won fair lady!" replied the doctor.

"It is true, my brother hinted this morning at the dissatisfaction Wolfgang was beginning to show with his profession."

"Why, there you have it, bold and clear!" cried the doctor. "The colonel knows much more, you may be sure, than he cares to tell you. Do you think his wife has ever gotten over the preference which the old gentleman has shown to Wolfgang over her own sons? They—Selma as well as the colonel—think of nothing else than of making the situation as unbearable as possible to Wolfgang. Do you think it was by chance that the young man was put into Degenfeld's battalion? It was done on purpose from the beginning, in order to put Wolfgang in a false position, to make him unpopular with his comrades, and to involve him in difficulties. Oh! I tell you, the colonel is deeper than you imagine. He would pursue his purpose of compelling Wolfgang to quit the service with greater energy even, if he were not afraid of irritating the general, and of thus working in the end only for your Camilla. You ought, therefore, to leave him some little hope that Cuno might possibly yet become Camilla's husband, and you would be delighted to see how eagerly the colonel would come to your assistance."

"*Cher ami*, you are a subtle fox," said the president, with sincere admiration.

"Do you think so?" said the little man, complacently. He blew off the last grains of snuff from his cuff, leaned back in his chair, crossed his lean legs, and looked at the two before him with cunning, watchful eye.

"I can tell you even more than that. The general is by no means as fond of the youth now as he was last year. 'That boy costs me a mint of money!' he said only the other day when I was out there. Well, you know all this money passes through the alderman's hands. You may imagine, therefore, what becomes of the greater part of it."

"But," said the president, "I thought Arthur's circumstances had improved very much of late? You hinted at it about a year ago, that he was nearly a bankrupt, and you see now how well he has pulled through."

"Heaven knows how he has managed to do it," said the doctor. "He was on the eve of failure; I am positive about that. It may be that the old gentleman has helped him, although I should hardly think he could have spent fifteen or twenty thousand dollars on him—and less than that would not have helped your brother. I gave him a year then; the time is nearly out; if he fails now, the game is in our hands; bankrupt relations are not in the position to be treated with ceremony."

"Poor devil!" said the president, shrugging his shoulders. "I should be sorry, after all, if matters went so very badly with him. He really looked wretched this morning."

"But, my dear president," said the doctor, "I do not understand you! If you really feel tender about your brother—a fact I have never noticed before—you ought to congratulate him on being relieved of his sorrowful wife, who was always sick and in trouble! I told him three months ago that she was beyond recovery. In return for my candor, he preferred that republican, Dr. Brand, to me, and I shall not so soon forget the insult."

"*Revenous à nos moutons, cher ami!*" said the president's wife. "You have not told us one thing yet, in spite of your prodigality to-day, which makes me think that you know this also. If we should satisfy Willamowski by giving him Aurelia, what, or rather who, remains for Camilla? If you deprive us of a son-in-law, you ought to furnish us with a substitute."

Dr. von Snepper opened his thin legs, stretched them as far as they would go, leaned still further back in his chair, played with the gold snuff-box in his left hand, cast a well-pleased glance at the tall mirror opposite, and said with a peculiar smile, "How do you think I look, baroness?"

"*Mais très bien,*" said the lady, who took his question literally, and raised her glasses to see him better.

"I hope so!" continued the little man in the same tone. "A man of sixty, well-preserved, with a private fortune of a quarter of a million, and an income from his practice of about ten thousand dollars, that is, with a revenue equal to that of a prime minister; a man whose services in behalf of the state and the dynasty the sovereign has just rewarded by the highest honor which he can bestow; a man who, in

case of a new ministry coming in, as is highly probable, is likely to assume the *portefeuille* of a certain used-up gentleman—I should think, baroness, such a man would not be so very unpleasant as a son-in-law !”

“Ha, ha, ha !” laughed Clotilda, “you are to-day in a charming humor, doctor, really charming !” And the fat lady threw herself back in her corner of the sofa, and laughed so very loud, that Joli jumped up and attacked the doctor’s legs, thinking that there must be some connection between this sudden laugh, which had cruelly roused him from his after-dinner nap, and the doctor, whom he abhorred.

“Horrible creature !” cried the doctor, and beat with his red-silk handkerchief angrily upon the aggressor.

Joli did not neglect such a glorious opportunity to injure his enemy. He struck his sharp teeth into the handkerchief and pulled, resting on his legs, as hard as he could, while the doctor pulled at the other end.

“I am dying, I am dying !” cried Clotilda.

“I wish you would relieve me of this creature,” said the doctor, with a glance at his dying friend which was by no means friendly.

“Call the animal back, my dear !” said the president, by no means pleased with the turn which the scene had taken.

There is no knowing how disagreeable the interview might yet have become, as the good lady could not stop laughing, and the doctor became more and more angry, if Joli’s thoughts had not been diverted from the attack by the entrance of one of his special friends.

The new-comer was Assistant-Judge Wyse. The young man, usually very quiet and not easily moved from his affected or real indifference, was so evidently disturbed and excited, that all exclaimed in one breath :

“What is the matter, judge ?”

“A strange piece of news,” was the answer, “which would hardly be credible if I had not heard it from the best authority.” And the young man sank exhausted into a chair.

“But, *mon Dieu*, you kill me,” cried the president’s wife.

“I pray, sir, what is it ?” said the president.

“The thing is this,” said Wyse, apparently very much embarrassed—“but I must beg you will not punish the bearer

of the news for the pain it will naturally cause you—the thing is, that his excellency, the old general, has this morning been arrested at Rheinfeld, and has been brought under escort to town, in order to be tried !”

The president's pale face had turned livid ; his wife was evidently near fainting ; Doctor Snepper looked at the poor crushed people with a certain satisfaction.

“ But how can that be, Wyse ? And who told you ?” stammered the president.

“ My brother,” said Wyse. “ You know he is attached to that court, and he himself held the first examination.”

“ But for heaven's sake, dear Wyse, what is it all about ?”

“ Of course, my brother would not and could not tell me that,” replied Wyse, with a look full of meaning at the poor lady, who sat almost stupefied, with eyes and mouth wide open, in the sofa corner.

“ I believe, dear Clotilda, you had better go to your room,” said the president, offering his arm to his wife and leading her out of the room. Her little strength seemed to have left her entirely, and she was apparently completely crushed by the blow. The president returned immediately, and seizing his visitor by the arm, he asked him in a low, hoarse voice : “ For God's sake, Wyse, what do you know about it ? What is it ?”

“ If you must know it, Mr. President : the general is charged with murder. His housekeeper has accused him of having caused the death of one of his servants some eight or ten years ago ; and however that may be, the public prosecutor has found himself in duty bound to order his arrest. The general denies, of course, everything, but my brother tells me that the old gentleman looks perfectly wretched, and he himself has a presentiment that the thing will end badly.”

The president sank into a chair and put his hand on his high, narrow forehead.

“ Do you think, judge, I can be allowed to see the general ?”

“ I hardly think so, Mr. President. You know——”

“ I know ! I know ! But they might make an exception. Go, Wyse, inquire about it. Through your brother you may do something for me. If you succeed, I shall be under the very greatest obligations to you.”

"Your wishes shall be obeyed, Mr. President," said Wyse, gracefully bowing to the two gentlemen, and leaving the room, accompanied by Joli's friendly bark.

"What do you say, dear friend, what do you say?" cried the president, looking at the doctor with anxious eyes.

"That I think the whole very probable," replied the latter, taking a pinch.

"Probable? Do you mean to kill me? It would be the most horrible thing that could ever have happened to me. I pray you, Sneider, a murderer in our family!—the head of our family a murderer! The thing would make a fearful sensation. Just think of the scandal! Like the Duc de Praslin in Paris! and just after that horrible affair in Hanover! Friend, I am beside myself! They will, they must drop us all! Such a scandal compromises the relatives irreparably to the tenth and twelfth generation! I should be lost, positively lost, and that just now, when I have a chance of being made civil governor or even minister!"

Doctor Sneider shrugged his shoulders. "It's a bad case," he said, and extended his hand to seize his hat and cane, which lay near him on the chair.

"But, great God! colleague, friend! You are surely not going? You will not forsake me in this great trouble?" cried the president, almost pushing the little man back again into his chair.

"I cannot advise you," said the little doctor, angrily. "I cannot help you." The president walked up and down the room with long strides, his hands on his back.

"But it is impossible!" he said, pausing before the doctor. "They cannot accept the denunciation of an old woman and condemn the head of a family like ours, which carries its pedigree up into the fourteenth century. The old gentleman would of course have the sympathy of the judges, of the jury, of the whole world in his favor."

"You might be mistaken in that point, my dear friend," said the doctor; "the general's reputation is well known not to be the very best; and then you forgot another very important point. The general is a Protestant, and his judges and the jurymen will mostly be Catholics. I should not wonder at all if, with the prejudices of the native population, public opinion should turn against him, and you know that

always has its influence on the judges, and especially on the jury. As I am a Catholic myself, and a scion of an old patrician family, you will do me the justice to think that I am able to judge these matters fairly, although I am, of course, on principle, opposed to all wrongful influences in such grave matters."

"But, great God! my dearest friend," said the president, seizing the little man by the button, as he stood before him, hat and cane in his hand, "just because you are a Catholic and a friend of the public prosecutor, you ought to be able to do something for me."

"Well," said the doctor, holding the gold knob of his cane to his thin lips, "my opinion might be of little value from *that* point of view, but—my evidence in court as to the condition of the body, if it ever should come to an autopsy——"

"Dearest, dearest friend," cried the president, embracing the little man, "you will save us! you are an angel! Command me! my gratitude would be unbounded!"

"Really?" asked the doctor, with an ironical smile; "but I cannot stay a second longer. Good-by, my dear sir, and take a seltzer powder; you are quite feverish."

Doctor Sneyper had nearly reached the door, when the president, who had been lost in meditation, suddenly started up and cried:

"One word, dear colleague."

"What do you wish?"

"Was that in earnest—just now—about Camilla?"

"But, my dear sir, I hope you know how to take a joke?" said the other, grinning hideously. "Good-by!"

The president followed him with a fixed look, till he had disappeared.

"Hm, hm!" he said to himself; "is that the way matters stand? It would be strange, to be sure! rather ridiculous! unsuitable! However, it would depend on the girl—she's different from most girls of her age. I might beat about the bush, rather than to see the old man—hm, hm!"

CHAPTER II.

THE arrest of the old general at Rheinfeld produced, as the president had predicted, an immense sensation in Cologne and far beyond it. Everybody was familiar with the name of a family that had occupied for generations the highest offices in the civil and military service of the government; everybody had, at some time or other, come in personal contact with one of the Hohensteins, and everybody was, therefore, more or less interested in the strange event. It was, however, not difficult to see that this interest arose by no means from sympathy, but that public opinion was rather pleased at the terrible misfortune. This was, no doubt, partly due to the local antagonism between the Catholic natives and the Protestant government officials; but the principal cause of the hostile attitude assumed by the public arose from the hatred which this great and noble family had, in the course of time, aroused by their pride and their haughty, unpopular manner. The arbitrary rule of the old civil governor, the father of the three brothers, was not yet forgotten in the province; the more than ordinary rudeness of the colonel; the hypocritical softness and politeness of the president, who was at heart a most inveterate aristocrat; the intolerable, overbearing pride of the young men, and even the notorious freedom of manners of Antonia Hohenstein—all were perfectly well known to the world at large, and thus the world did not deem it by any means improbable that the old general at Rheinfeld, whose rudeness and brutality, as commanding-general of the provinces, were also still well remembered, should have added another crime to the many wrongs he had already committed. Public imagination was, moreover, aroused by the remarkable nature of the crime. Everybody knew, of course, that the charge was murder. Some said the victim was one of the general's servants, who had been too intimate with the general's housekeeper and mistress; others had it that it was a rich Jew, a dealer in jewels, who had spent the night at Rheinfeld, but only to be robbed of his precious property and of his life at the same time—a story which accounted most conveniently for the exagger-

ated statements of the general's fortune. Still others were not content with one murder, but spoke of a whole series of murders, which the general was said to have committed, with the aid of his housekeeper, in order to satisfy his cupidity ; and this account began at last to prevail most largely, because it gave most food to the desire of people for horrible things. The old gentleman became a gray-haired Blue Beard, and Castle Rheinfeld a murderer's den, full of fearful mysteries, which the trial would soon expose in broad daylight to the horror of all good Christians.

It seemed, however, as if the curiosity of the public was to be left ungratified for some time ; since the case, which had at first appeared so simple, that the old general was considered, as it were, only a few days from the gallows, grew every day more complicated. It became known that the evidence was very contradictory, and that the numerous witnesses supported now one and now another theory. At last the Blue Beard party became the strongest. Strong evidence had accumulated, inculcating the person whose affidavit had first led to the general's imprisonment—the old gentleman's housekeeper, Mrs. Bridget Hans—and she also had been arrested. Hardly had the woman been carried to jail, when the news reached town that her husband, Balthasar Hans, schoolmaster in the village of Rheinfeld, and one of the most important witnesses for the prosecution, was missing. It was well known that this man had for years enjoyed the general's special favor, and as a mark of this, had been allowed to marry Mrs. Bridget. In this unenviable position the man had apparently vegetated for years in the little village, till his sudden disappearance made him enter upon the scene in the still more painful light of an accomplice.

But that was not all. Everybody took it for granted that he also had been murdered in order to prevent his evidence being heard. It appeared that his wife had been at Rheinfeld the last day on which he had been seen, and passers-by declared they had heard angry voices, and especially the scolding voice of the woman, through the closed window-shutters.

This incident raised the excited imagination of the public to a state of frenzy. And now it appeared, also, why the poor schoolmaster had been compelled to leave this world so

suddenly. He was the only one who could point out with certainty the place in the park at Rheinfeld where the murdered man had been interred. It was an awful story. The good people of Cologne were nearly beside themselves, but at the same time not a little proud that they also had their fearful tragedy, like so many other great cities.

For the Hohenstein family, however, the drama was a calamity of the gravest character. The sovereign, it is true, went so far in his condescension as to send word to the president, through the governor, and to the colonel, through his commanding general, that he would not forget his faithful servants in their undeserved sufferings. All the other officials, it is true, no sooner heard this—and the persons in question took good care to let it be heard—than they hastened to present assurances of their undiminished respect, affection, or esteem; but it was nevertheless “a bad case,” which by no means contributed to make life more pleasant to the colonel’s and the president’s families.

One comfort—a qualified one, however—was the fact that they could hear every day how things went on, thanks to the kindness of Mr. Wyse, brother of the young official who had been charged with the preliminary investigation. The old general obstinately denied everything; and—according to the two Wyse—he displayed in his answers a most unusual cunning and a strength of memory which was almost unheard of in so old a man. It seemed almost impossible to involve him in a contradiction by the most searching cross-examination. He insisted upon his first statement, that in the night of August 11, 1839, a violent attack of coughing had roused him from his sleep, whereupon he had rung the bell for his servant, Anselm George, from Churchtown. As the man had not appeared after repeated ringing, he had himself risen, with much difficulty, to wake the lazy fellow. Not finding him in his room, he had gone to the other wing of the château, where the pantry was, because he remembered that the man had more than once managed to obtain the key of the pantry, in order to steal liquor there and to get drunk. He had found the man lying there—at the foot of the spiral staircase which led to the upper story—dead, and with his skull smashed. He had then waked the house keeper and the other servants, who had placed the body on

a table, and there it had been seen on the following morning by several persons, among them by the schoolmaster, Balthasar Hans. Then the body had been carried into a barn, and, as far as he could recollect, because the heat was unusually powerful, it had been buried the subsequent night by said Balthasar Hans and two men-servants called Peter Schutz and Jacob Pitter, both of whom had since died. The necessary reports had been made at the proper time, but the priest of Churchtown, Rev. Ambrosius Kandle, had, on account of sickness, not been able to attend the funeral. He had never seen or known the place where the body had been buried.

Bridget Hans, however, deposed very differently. According to her evidence, she had had a love affair with the departed, which she had been compelled to keep a great secret from the general, because he had just cause of jealousy. Nevertheless she had been surprised by the general in that fatal night at a stolen interview with her lover. Anselm, though a powerful man, had been frightened out of his wits by seeing the old general suddenly appear at the door with a huge axe in his hand and rage in his eyes. The unfortunate man had sunk on his knees, imploring the general's forgiveness. The only answer had been a single blow, which laid open the right side of the petitioner's head and instantly killed him. Then the general had turned to Bridget with the intention of taking her life also, but he had yielded to her urgent entreaties, insisting only upon her dragging the dead body to the foot of the stone steps and arranging it so as to give an air of probability to his story, that the man had been killed by a violent fall. He had then compelled her to go to bed, so that she might be roused by the general in the presence of other servants. As for the funeral of the murdered man, she corroborated the general's statement. Her husband's disappearance she explained by his reluctance to live with her, as she had asked him to do, after the general had been arrested. He might possibly have committed suicide, for he had always been a great coward; but at all events she knew nothing of his present whereabouts.

"The whole thing is as complicated as it well can be," said Judge Wyse to the president's wife; "a real kaleido-

scope, or like one of your *changeantes* dresses, to use a comparison with which you are more familiar. To-day green, to-morrow red, and the day after to-morrow probably blue, just as the witnesses come up. Now a new personage has made his appearance, a certain Kilian, till quite recently the general's own man——"

"Oh, I know him very well, a tall, fresh-looking, charming fellow," said the lady.

"The very same, madam ; it seems that this Kilian and Bridget have made common cause with each other, in order to extort, by a false accusation, as much money from the old gentleman as——"

"The horrible creature ! " cried the president's wife.

"Certainly, madam ! Only the very fact that they have lately, both of them, deposited very considerable sums of money with a little broker in town, speaks very unfavorably against the general ; for although he insists upon the money being stolen from him, they assert, on the contrary, that he has given it to them as hush-money."

"No doubt he has been robbed, the dear old gentleman," said the lady.

"Very likely," answered Judge Wyse ; "still, the general seems to have drawn of late very large sums in cash from his bankers here in town, and his statement as to the manner in which he has disposed of them, is rather doubtful."

The president, who heard a statement of this conversation soon after from his wife, was particularly struck by this last remark.

"I fear," he said, "this perfectly horrible affair will bring to light all that has been so long carefully kept from the public, especially the reason why Camilla has engaged herself to Wolfgang. The old sinner is capable of making a clean breast of the whole ! We are lost if it becomes known that this proposed match was only a speculation, a way to obtain the old man's fortune. We must try more than ever to keep up the *entente cordiale* ; we must especially manage to conciliate Wolfgang, who is evidently offended by Camilla's conduct. This is not the moment to break off the engagement. Snepper ought to understand that as long as the body has not been found his claims upon Camilla are perfectly illusory. I must have a talk with the old fop."

Doctor Snepper fully approved of the president's plan.

"I ask for nothing," he said, "but that you do not deprive yourself of the power to reward me for the services which I may possibly render your family in this affair. You approve of my attachment to your charming daughter — *bon !* you make it a condition that I obtain the acquittal of the old gentleman—quite fair ; death alone can be had for nothing, and not that always. I shall present myself at the proper time to ask for the sweet prize ; till then you may let that fool Wolfgang enjoy to his heart's content the illusion of a happiness which is never to be his. Keep him in good humor, and allay his jealousy as best you can !"

"But how can we, dear sir ?"

"Marry Aurelia !"

"To Willamowski ?"

"To Willamowski !"

"But will he be disposed to do so just now ?"

"Just now ? Tickle his vanity, engage his generosity ; he is fool enough to go into the net !"

The president profited by this good advice. It was not difficult to win over Aurelia in favor of marrying Willamowski. Of late the young lady had had sad experiences in connection with some of her lovers. Lieutenant Count Brinkman, who had last winter danced every night with her, had become engaged to beautiful Miss Georgianna Hinkel ; Kettenberg, the painter, had been captivated by Antonia, whose life-size portrait he was painting for the exhibition, and of whom he had told Aurelia such wonderful things, that the latter was deeply offended at his fickleness, as she called it. There remained, therefore, nothing to be done but to make the project acceptable to Willamowski ; and the president was determined to follow, in doing this, the doctor's admirable prescription to the letter. It had been skillfully arranged that one evening, when the president's wife received the few guests who continued to appear since the catastrophe, the baron should be left alone in one of the salons. The lady of the house complained bitterly of the friends who vanished with the sunshine of good fortune, until the baron appeared in his own eyes uncommonly brave and generous. Then she painted in glowing colors the cares of a loving mother's heart, when she thought of the fate of her

daughters, to whom she would give but a modest fortune, and finally she offered her hand to the baron and said, looking very affectionately at him: "I must look a moment after my poor, suffering Camilla; I suppose I can entrust my other child for a few minutes to *your* care, baron?"

The baron kissed her hand gratefully, opened the door for her, and looked much excited when he returned to the table at which the "child" was crocheting a silk purse, and at the same time watching him very carefully from under her long black eyelashes.

"For whom do you work that pretty thing there, Miss Aurelia?" said the baron, after a long pause, during which he had been moving restlessly to and fro on his chair.

"Not for myself," said Aurelia; "I would have nothing to put inside."

"Ahem!" said the baron.

"You say——?"

"Nothing, nothing at all! I only meant to say, that depends on yourself alone!"

"How do you mean, dear Stillfried?" asked the "child," raising her innocent brown eyes to him.

"I mean—*sapristi*, Miss Aurelia! I am not a man of many words. I have not the gift of the gab, like Brinkman; I am not a genius like Kettenberg. But if you are willing to take me, you shall never want gold pieces enough to fill that pretty green thing there. You have told me often enough, in former days, that I am at the bottom a thoroughly honest fellow, and that you are very fond of dancing with me, and that my brougham is the easiest-going carriage you know."

This speech, uttered with all the signs of greatest confusion of ideas, had frightened the "child" so terribly that she came near fainting, sank back in her chair, and pressed her handkerchief upon her face.

The clever baron thought this might be a favorable sign. He knelt down, therefore, by the chair, and seizing one of the hands that were hanging down listlessly, he cried:

"Aurelia, divine Aurelia! Tell me that you will make the usual calls to-morrow in my brougham. I will drive my black horse, though the animal is too good for such a purpose."

Aurelia was so deeply touched by this evidence of self-

sacrificing tenderness, that she wound her arms around the neck of the dragoon, and kissed the pretty, well-dyed moustache repeatedly.

"Angel!" lisped the lieutenant of dragoons.

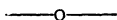
At that moment the door opened, and the terrified mother appeared on the threshold with her husband by her side.

Stillfried, Baron Willamowski, jumped up, seized the young lady's hand, led her up to her mother, and said:

"Mrs. President—Mr. President—my betrothed, if you consent!"

"But, great heavens!" said the president. "How has this so suddenly——?"

"Come to my arms, dear son!" said his wife, pressing the happy man to her maternal bosom.



CHAPTER III.

"ALL, all must change!" How often had Wolfgang repeated to himself the comforting words, as spring began daily to shine brighter upon earth, and all was green and blooming around him. But he had said it so often without finding consolation, that he at last gave up all faith in the glad message. Could spring change what was unchangeable? Could spring, while decking trees and bushes with lovely, tender foliage, and giving to the birds the old, ever-new songs, bring back to him the beloved one who had been so fond of wandering beneath their shade, and who had listened to the simple melodies with such genuine joy and such touching reverence? Can this shower of pink blossoms efface the traces of the dear one? Can the whispering of the breeze in the waving branches drown the memory of the sweet voice which, like that of a deity, spoke to him the first words of love in the morning dawn of his soul? Is death less fearless because it is an enigma, the mysteries of which our dull mind cannot fathom, the horrors of which our fancy cannot comprehend, the image of which even our memory is too weak to retain? Are we less

unhappy to-day because we know we shall laugh and be merry again a few years hence, as if we had never lost a mother? Wretched humanity, which bears the livery of misery as a garment of honor, which makes necessity a virtue and want a religion !

The death of his beloved mother was the first great grief which Wolfgang had experienced ; and if this event must needs have been at all times one of the deepest sorrow for him, it was doubly so now, when his mind was already oppressed and saddened by other influences. He remained for days in a condition which would have appeared incomprehensible to all who did not know the mutual love that had existed between mother and son ; and even when the first burning grief had passed away, his melancholy was still of a kind which filled all who loved him with sincere apprehensions. But the world, with its countless claims, triumphed at last over the self-inflicted pain, and compelled him not to seek pleasure in life for himself, but to live in sympathy with others and for others.

First of all, for his father, in whom, since Margaret's death, a remarkable change had taken place. Apparently the alderman had recovered from the blow in a few days, with his usual elasticity. He pursued his ordinary occupations ; he frequented even his clubs as before ; he dressed as carefully as formerly, perhaps with even greater elegance ; but those who observed him, noticed that he did all this mechanically, simply because it was his habit, and he thought it proper to do so. It looked as if all his strength barely sufficed to enable him to keep up appearances such as he had maintained all his life. He spoke as often as before at the meetings of the city council, but a triumph at the time of voting produced no elation, and a defeat pained him no longer, sensitive as he had heretofore been on the subject. When leaving the council-room he would converse in his usual courteous manner with Alderman Heydman & Co., Senator Wester, and other old fogies, and more or less fanatic adherents of the government, but his jests were icy, and his smile as cold as his hands.

"I don't know," said Mr. Wester, a slightly hump-backed, red-haired dandy, who was extremely proud of his beauty and his cleverness, "but Hohenstein looks to me like a man who

goes on playing a game which he knows he has lost, merely from good-nature." Alderman Heydman & Co. looked around timidly and replied: "Do you know, my dear sir, I sometimes think Hohenstein must be in some way involved in that horrible affair of the general's. It would be awful—awful!"

Although not all the business friends of the alderman might entertain the same apprehensions as Heydman & Co., the effect of the "horrible affair" on the alderman's business was yet very serious. Large sums of money which he had borrowed, were demanded back; creditors who formerly would have waited his pleasure, now insisted upon being paid; his old embarrassments became more pressing, new ones were added—and the alderman discussed these things with his son as if they were matters of course. "Such things blow over!" he said; "that affair of your grand-uncle is very inopportune, but it has to be borne."

Wolfgang thought, in spite of these assurances of his father, that his situation was far more serious than during the spring of last year, and fancied he saw in the composure with which he spoke of his troubles, the calmness of despair. He felt all the more deeply that he ought not to abandon his father now, but do everything in his power to help him through these hard times. Thus there arose a closer intimacy between father and son in these days, than had ever existed before. That evil fortune which seemed to have befallen the whole family, seemed at least to have had one good effect: to bind the members more closely to each other.

This sense of voluntary or involuntary communion made it impossible for Wolfgang to break the chains with which his engagement and his military duties had burdened him. Now that the name of his family was on everybody's lips, he could not well take steps which would only add to the slanders and charges already current. If he were to quit the army now, everybody would ascribe it to his despair about the disgraced honor of his family. Nor could he permit a man like Willamowski to surpass him in generosity—a man who, foolishly proud as he was of his old name, had chosen this very time of humiliation to offer it to a member of the Hohenstein family! Camilla had fallen on his neck when

he returned to her house the first time after his mother's death, begging him to be friends again and to pardon her all the caprices by which she had annoyed him—could he refuse her just now? The mother had taken him to her bosom with a flood of tears, and called him her "dear, dear son"—could he just now tell her that he did not desire to be her son? With all his truthfulness, Wolfgang could not say all this at such a moment. He stammered a few confused excuses, and was very grateful when they did not reproach him for his rare visits, which he managed to time so that he found always at least one or another visitor in the almost deserted salons.

At the same time, however, that his heart was bleeding almost to death, it was deeply agitated by his anxiety for the fate of his country. Wolfgang had ever loved liberty, because he thought it just and right; but his refined taste had been shocked by the coarse form under which liberty enters into life. Now, his more frequent contact with the world, and his conviction that a conflict must come, had freed him from this repugnance. He knew now that the mechanic need not be ashamed of his stained and spotted dress; that the man who wields the axe, even if he were a god, must have callous hands, and that rude work not only excuses rude forms, but requires them.

The young man frequently discussed these matters with Munzer and Degenfeld, whose extreme views were just now more attractive to him than his uncle's calmer mode of thinking. He did not hide this preference from his uncle, and Peter Schmitz did not think of blaming him for it. "I understand it perfectly," said Peter Schmitz; "at your time of life you cannot give up the hope of seeing your ideal established in stern reality. I should hardly esteem you as highly as I do if you were less sanguine in your hopes and expectations. Every one of us has thought, at one time or another, that the evils of society could be cured by communism or socialism; you might safely say that all the founders of humane, religious systems have labored under that mistake. But if the world could be cured by philanthropists, dear Wolfgang, we should long since have been in paradise. But paradise is a dream; it has been, but never can be again! We must construct our world on a different

basis—on the basis of law, of justice, of the solidarity of interests. It is the glory of ardent hearts to be enthusiastic about an ideal ; but sober sense would be disgraced if it continued in this error. I praise you for your mistake ; but I cannot pardon Munzer and Degenfeld for the same error. You must come and see me as often as you can, and we will discuss that matter ; it will be a relief and an improvement to both of us.”

Wolfgang willingly accepted the invitation. Since his mother’s death the paternal house had become almost intolerable to him ; here, in the company of good men, he felt his grief soothed ; here he could speak as he felt ; here he could take off the mask and show his true face. As he avoided mentioning his other social relations, so they carefully abstained from touching upon them ; and even Aunt Bella, with her warlike spirit, seemed to be disposed to let the matter rest, after having given vent, on the memorable morning of Margaret’s funeral, to her wrath against the whole “kin.”

In his intercourse with Ottilia a slight change had recently taken place, which would not have escaped a more acute observer. The more frequently he met her and looked into her clear, blue eyes, the more deeply he felt the charm of her soft, sweet voice and her melodious laugh ; the more sympathy he found in her heart when discussing many things which are generally far beyond the horizon of young girls, and the more he had cause to admire her calm judgment and the delicacy of her feelings, the stranger it seemed to him that he should have fallen, from the beginning, into such a familiar tone with this highly-endowed being, and the more irresistibly he felt himself attracted by the lovely girl. She, for her part, was precisely the same she had ever been. Only Aunt Bella thought she noticed that her eyes had a deeper brilliancy than formerly, and that she had become more lively, energetic—“more of a Schmitz,” as Aunt Bella said. But the good lady did not see that Ottilia was no sooner alone than she would sit and dream by the hour, till, rousing herself from her revery, she would pass her hand over her eyes, and say in a low voice to herself : “All, all must change !”

CHAPTER IV.

THE old general had now been two months in prison, and still the investigation had brought no greater clearness into this most mysterious affair. The public began to be impatient, and the presiding judge said to his assistant that he would pay a round sum to get rid of the troublesome matter. "In confidence, my dear Wyse," he said, "I am in a most embarrassing position. You, a native of this province and a Catholic like myself, will readily understand that I should by no means dislike to see these Hohensteins thoroughly humiliated. But if that is to be done, it must be done promptly. Now that the matter has been dragged on and on, the public are getting tired of it; they complain of the slowness of justice, and fancy there is nothing in it after all! And if that feeling were confined to the public at large!—but just read this letter."

Mr. Wyse cast a glance at the letter. "From the Minister of Justice!" he exclaimed, surprised.

"Confidential and private; just read!" said the judge.

"It seems they desire, up there, that we—should discover nothing!" said Mr. Wyse, after having read the letter.

"No doubt," was the reply. "But now read this."

"From the——"

"Hush, my dear sir, our Protestant clerk there must not hear that—and in his own hand! What do you say now?"

"But how is this possible?"

"I can explain it to you! You recollect that among the first witnesses examined, there was a mad old priest, a disagreeable man, who, I fear, is but a frail pillar of our most holy church. We could not get much out of him; the only remarkable circumstance was his confession that the old gentleman had recently shown very great restlessness in his intercourse with him, and expressed a wish to become a Catholic. At that time I paid little attention to this assertion; it was as equivocal as almost everything that has as yet been elicited in this trial. But now it looks as if this priest had found means to gain the ear of our great head of the church. I think there is a passage in the letter—please

let me see?—look here! what can that mean, except that his holiness is interested in the matter? What can we do? We also have a conscience, and——”

“If we could only find the *corpus delicti*!” said Wyse. “As long as that is missing, the investigation is not closed.”

“To be sure! To be sure!” remarked the other. “But I have nearly given up all hope. The whole graveyard has been turned upside down, and we have found nothing, not a trace—What do you want?”

“A letter by the city post!” said the messenger.

“What is it?” asked Wyse, when he saw his chief turn deadly pale, while reading the letter.

“Well, this is certainly remarkable,” said the judge. “It looks as if there was no end to this mystery.”

The letter consisted of a few lines, written in an evidently much disguised hand, and ran thus:

“The grave of † † † which you are looking for, is not in the graveyard near the chapel, but in Rheinfeld park, ten or twelve yards behind the last tree of the large chestnut avenue, to the left of the decayed temple of friendship.”

“What do you think of that?” asked the judge.

“It is a humbug.”

“But it has to be examined, nevertheless. You must go out there this afternoon, dear Wyse, with the doctor. It may be that the remains will not bear being removed.”

“Then you really believe——?”

“I do not believe. I am convinced. Make haste, I pray!”

Before Dr. Snapper drove out to Rheinfeld with Assistant-Judge Wyse, he had a long conversation with President Hohenstein; and when he returned late at night, a second conversation, which was protracted till far into the night. The doctor reported that the body had been found on the precise spot designated in the letter, and remarkably well preserved, as the soil consisted of almost pure sand. The skull, especially, had been nearly perfect, and there was not the slightest doubt that the man had been murdered, and by a blow with an axe, exactly as Bridget had deposed.

When the doctor reached this point of his report, the president started up from his chair, and walked with long strides up and down in the room. The doctor sat, bent

double, in his chair, watching the excited man as a cat watches a mouse which cannot escape, however anxiously it may rush to and fro.

"I brought the skull with me," he said. "I keep it locked up in my writing-table. No one has seen it but myself, not even Wyse, who fortunately felt sick at the right moment. If I produce the skull to-morrow as it is, your worthy uncle loses his head, even if he were ten times an excellency. If I produce it in such a shape that the man might possibly have been killed by a fall—and the thing can be done by a little clever management—the general is a free man day after to-morrow, as everybody in the highest regions of government desires nothing more than to get rid of him."

"But, my dear sir, you talk as if there was any question about the matter!" said the president.

The little man shrugged his shoulders.

"That depends on you, now!"

"But you know I am ready to do all you ask; I will call you with pleasure my——"

The president did not generally hesitate much in telling a little white lie, but this one would not come out boldly and bravely.

"My son—in—law," supplied the doctor with a malicious grin, to complete the phrase; "very good! But how is it about my dear betrothed? will she pardon me my twenty years or so too much, eh?"

"My daughter is accustomed to comply with the wishes of her parents," said the president.

"Oh indeed?" cried the doctor. "You do not say so! I always thought it was just the other way. If you can give me no other security!"

"But what would you have, dear friend?"

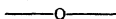
"First, that you present me to-morrow, in presence of two witnesses—say Willamowski and Kettenberg—as Camilla's betrothed. I do not mean officially, but in words which, without calling the thing by its name, have precisely the same effect. Secondly, I must insist upon your pursuing your old policy with regard to Wolfgang. I mean, that you manage it so, through your brother, the colonel, as to compel the man to leave the army, and to enable you thus to break off the engagement on your part."

"I will do whatever you desire—whatever you desire," said the president, offering his long narrow hand to the doctor.

"Then *les beaux esprits se rencontrent*, as usual," replied the latter, accepting the tips of the fingers.

Two days later, the morning papers contained, under the head of Local News, the following paragraph :

"We are happy to be able to inform our readers that the judicial proceedings against a personage of the highest standing in the province, which were begun about two months ago upon the affidavit of an ill-disposed servant, have come to their natural conclusion, in consequence of very important and unexpected evidence which has quite recently come to light. The accused has at once been set free again, to the satisfaction of all who had known and revered him. He immediately left, in company with his physician and a few ladies, members of his family, for his château R. We hope that the innocent victim of an abominable conspiracy may soon recover from the effects of his sufferings, and enjoy a long and peaceful evening at the close of his active and most useful life."



CHAPTER V.

THE sudden termination of the great mystery, which, in spite of the newspaper sentiment, no one had either wished or expected, would no doubt have produced a still greater sensation in the great world, if the thunder-clouds which were just then rising on all sides of the political horizon had not exclusively pre-occupied the interest of the public. The last spasms of the revolution were still powerful enough at one place to shake the faith of a people in the legitimacy of a government "by the grace of God;" and in another country to upset it altogether, at least for a time. The parliament had once more been dissolved, and the province was again in a state of violent fermentation; everywhere rebellion raised its flaming banner, encouraged

by the fall of the powerful dynasty in the south, through which the people had hoped to recover the unity and greatness of the common fatherland.

The stirring news which came in every day and every hour, fell upon Wolfgang's soul like sparks of burning fire. He had long since been accustomed to look upon the conflict in his own soul as a reflex from the grand conflict which he expected would soon break out among the nations of the earth; and when he now heard the tocsin sound in all the great cities, filled with barricades and enthusiastic bands of armed men, he fancied it brought to him also a summons to lay aside the bonds of untruthfulness and hypocrisy, and to speak and act as his impatient heart desired.

In these meditations the painter Kettenberg interrupted him, a few days later, entering at an unusually early hour, at which the fast young man was not apt to be seen. Wolfgang was rather surprised at Kettenberg's appearance. After a few efforts to establish a kind of intimacy with the intelligent and genial artist, he had given it up, and kept rather aloof from him, especially since his intimacy with Willamowski, Brinkman, Hinkel, Wyse, and men of that class, did not seem to speak very favorably for his morals. During the last few weeks, when he had been even less frequently than before at the president's house, he had almost lost sight of the clever libertine; he only recollected that the last time he had been in Willamowski's rooms, they had made great fun of the question whether Antonia Hohenstein was Kettenberg's last conquest or he hers? He had taken little interest in the question, for with Antonia also he had not succeeded in establishing more intimate relations.

"You are surprised," said Kettenberg, after the first greeting, "to see me call so early; but I have to tell you several matters of importance for you, and but little time for it. I am going to leave town in two hours!"

"You are going to leave us?"

"Do not say that, as if you minded in the least whether I go or stay! Such are men, however! No faith and no truth from Dan to Beersheba. I am almost persuaded you will not believe me if I tell you that I have a very high opinion of you, that I feel very much concerned about your welfare, and that I am about to give you the most striking

evidence of my interest in you. But I must be brief ; pray listen attentively. First of all, a question. Have you recently heard from Camilla or her mother ? No ? I thought so. They will not even write any more. They will try to starve you out ; they will try to force you to do what the honorable company have not the courage to do themselves."

"But, Mr. Kettenberg, I really have not the pleasure——"

"To understand me I will speak more clearly—or better, quite clearly at once. You are the victim of a rascally intrigue, my dear baron. I cannot tell you now, for want of time, how I have found out all their tricks, but I give you my word of honor that all is true. They have determined in the family to drop you. It seems that the man who is to succeed you in the happiness of being ruined by Camilla, has quite recently rendered such eminent services to the Hohenstein family that nothing but the most exalted reward is sufficient for him. This other man is, to tell you that also, no one else but Doctor von Sneider—you laugh ?—you laugh heartily !—do so, but you may rely upon it that the man who in two short months has gained his patent of nobility and his title as privy-councillor, is also capable, in spite of his sixty years, of cutting out a young lieutenant of twenty-three, and of making happy a young lady of eighteen, endowed with a marvellously cool head and a really arctic heart. However that may be, my friend Willamowski and I, we have been entrusted with this arrangement, of course under the seal of secrecy. What will you have ? The young lady makes a magnificent match ! A minister's portefeuille for the happy husband—a superb mansion in William street in Berlin, presentation at court, a long train of admirers of every rank, from the royal prince to the youngest chamberlain, among whom she has the choice. Happy young wife ! Dear baron, I tell you, angels have fallen for the sake of a smaller guerdon ; why not then a girl who, like Camilla Hohenstein, has ever since she was born had a demon in her ? Well ! You are still laughing, and, to tell the truth, I think you may laugh ! Nevertheless, I beg leave to remind you also of the serious side of your situation. They are quite clever enough, you see, in the enemy's camp, to know that the world always sides with youth and loyalty, and that the stain which the late affair of the general has

left on the Hohenstein escutcheon—in spite of the flaming article in the morning papers—is not likely to become any smaller by this match between so beautiful a young girl as Camilla is, and such an old sinner as the new privy-councillor. They want, therefore, a pretext for breaking with you, and think this can be best attained by inducing you to quit the service—a step which would at the same time bring upon you the displeasure of the old gentleman at Rheinfeld. They have two ways for doing it. First, you will be annoyed in your regimental duties, reprimanded by the colonel, and like things. For you must know they have shown the colonel's family only a part of their cards, and want the fools to believe that Cuno has, after your downfall, the first claim and the best prospect to obtain the hand of the beautiful Helen. Cuno is, of course, delighted with the project, and determined to facilitate your retreat as far as he can; he will therefore involve you in as many difficulties as possible. Your intimacy with that pretty cousin in River street will furnish them quite a dangerous weapon. Well, well, you need not get angry! What are pretty cousins good for, except to be courted? And the girl is pretty! *Sapristi!* A head like a Muse! I have rarely seen so fine a face, such blue eyes, and such a thoughtful smile! I admire your taste, and shall be delighted if you can give that awkward brute, Cuno, a lesson. For Cuno is the discoverer of the beauty in River street; he brags of the kind greetings he receives from Miss Schmitz whenever he passes her window. Be calm, my dear sir! Not a soul believes him; not even Cuno himself, for he is thoroughly aware of his own miserable character; and least of all does Willamowski, who in spite of his fast way of living, is still at the bottom of his heart a good fellow, and has positively refused to play any part in this wretched intrigue. I think I can recommend the baron, if you should ever feel called upon to ask some one to help you in regulating certain affairs."

Kettenberg had allowed no interruption in the current of his speech; now he took a cigar from his cigar-holder, lit it, and said, leaning back in his chair:

"There, dear baron! I hope you are now sufficiently informed to find your way through this labyrinth. I saw the other day that you could hold a pistol pretty steadily, and

that you have a capital eye. With such talents and a stout heart, I should think one could defy the devil himself, much less this small fry. Enough, therefore, about you ; and now a few words about myself. I should not like you, above all others, to think badly of me after I leave ; and besides, you can render me a service in a matter to which I can unfortunately not attend before I go. I do not know, dear Hohenstein, if you have heard that I am paying my attentions to your beautiful aunt—what a number of beautiful women you have in your family ; you lucky fellow ! You know it ? Well ! If you had not been told, I could have furnished you with evidence. Antonia and myself are quite accidentally leaving town to-day by the same train, and I should not wonder if we were to travel some distance together. Well, that does not concern anybody, since neither I nor the baroness are so situated as to owe much respect to the world at large. My principle is, never to inquire after the antecedents of ladies whom I admire ; but unfortunately the fair baroness has been as good a friend of Doctor Munzer as she is now—*eh bien*—for the moment, of mine. At least I surmise so, from the fact that she always becomes more or less excited when the good doctor's name is mentioned, and I am almost afraid she is going to Egypt with me, not because she likes me, but because Doctor Munzer has ceased to like her. To be sure, I do not care—if she only goes. I love the East, and I love beautiful women ; they belong together ; neither of them can stand in the light of sober common sense. However, I did not mean to give you a lecture on morals or æsthetics ; but only to beg you will tell your friend, that if he wishes to hold me responsible for Antonia's caprice, I shall be as ready, after my return, to make a fool of myself as he may be. I only hope heaven will postpone my return for a long while ! You can also tell him that I could not well make the offer now, as I really think a man ought not to waste powder before he is quite sure of that for which two people are going to kill each other. And now, dear baron, farewell ! You'll excuse my leaving so unceremoniously, but I have a whole world to attend to, and very little time left. *Addio !*"

Kettenberg shook hands with Wolfgang and hurried away. Wolfgang was at first almost stunned by all he had heard ;

then a sense of relief came over him that the hour had at last arrived when a decision was to be made, and he could act. He did not doubt the truth of Kettenberg's statements. The painter was very acute of sight and of hearing; he knew the details of the president's home-life very accurately; and what he had not seen and heard himself, he no doubt had learned from Aurelia, whose confidant he still was; or from Willamowski, who, as Aurelia's betrothed, had not ceased to be the friend of Aurelia's faithless lover. Besides, all that Kettenberg had stated was perfectly in keeping with the character of the persons concerned. Camilla, the betrothed of a fanatical monarchist, a gray-haired dandy, a libertine of worst repute! The charmer had cast aside her disguise and shown herself in her true nature. How often he had accused himself of ingratitude in former days, when doubts had arisen in his heart as to the real character of his beloved! How he had looked everywhere for reasons by which he could explain this or that objectionable feature, to find one *naïve*, and the other at least harmless! All that was over now, and heaven be thanked for it! As he had been relieved of the bonds of an unworthy love, so he would be relieved of other bonds also—his dependence on an old, mysterious man, whose brutal violence was a type of the whole race; his connection with an institution which was so sadly behind the times, and acknowledged by all lovers of liberty to be the principal obstacle to success in a revolution; and his intercourse with men whom he despised as thoroughly as he did his noble cousins and their friends! And what was that Kettenberg had said about Cuno's impudence in speaking of Ottilia? It was evidently a pure invention of the fool's—otherwise Aunt Bella would no doubt have mentioned it at some time or other. But the mere thought that something of the kind could ever happen, the mere circumstance that the scoundrel should have taken Ottilia's name in vain in a circle of low men—this revolted Wolfgang, and filled his heart with more hatred and thirst for revenge than he had ever felt in his life. And what was that story about Munzer, Antonia, and Kettenberg? The very companion-piece to his own inglorious love affair! Had Antonia really loved Munzer? And had she been able to sacrifice a Munzer to Kettenberg?

Thus, here was again a cunning, intriguing beauty, who lured a man bent upon very different purposes from his sphere, and then betrayed him in the most shameless manner! The same comedy, scene for scene, only the names differed. But put Munzer for Wolfgang, Antonia for Camilla, Snepper for Kettenberg, Clara for—Ottilia—for Ottilia! If I had known—if I had loved her—and is not to know to love her?—if I had known her before I went to Rheinfeld—this would never have happened! never! Oh, that it could be undone! That I could become again what I was before this ill-fated change took place! Could? Why, what hinders me? The best of mothers would smile upon me approvingly if she saw me break these unworthy chains! Uncle, Aunt Bella, Ottilia—they would all call me their own once more; but father? father?—what would he say? It is true, he also has changed his views about this matter. And Munzer? and Degenfeld?

Wolfgang had not time to answer all these questions, for the hour had come when he must appear on parade, and he had to be very quick if he was not to be too late.

These parades, with their long hours of busy idleness, had from the beginning disgusted Wolfgang, and to-day the horror seemed to be unending. Those who were initiated in the mysteries of the service, soon saw that there was something important under way. In the first place, the five generals of whom the garrison at Cologne could boast, put their heads together; then the “commanders of regiments” were ordered up, then the “staff officers,” then the “captains,” then again the “staff officers,” then the “captains,” and finally “all officers.”

When the large circle was formed, when all right hands were raised regulation fashion to the helmets, and the gentlemen in the inner ring had drawn their heels close together—those outside were not quite so conscientious—the commanding-general, Count Schnabel, said: “Gentlemen! I have to communicate various matters of importance. The hour has come for you to show your courage. The flag of rebellion against our most gracious sovereign has been raised in our province, in the country immediately around us. Be it far from me to assume that the doctrines of men who forget their duty to God and break their oaths of allegiance,

can have entered the heart of any one among you ; that any one could for a moment forget that the sword he wears at his side has been given him by his most gracious sovereign, and that he is responsible to no power on earth but to him—it is a matter of course that all of you here assembled have no other thought than to live and to die for the throne and the altar, the two holiest of holy things. But, gentlemen, many of you are still young, and do not know that there is no remedy against treason and disloyalty but force ; and therefore I should like to address a few words of paternal admonition to my younger comrades. Do not allow yourselves to be deceived by the mask of honest conviction behind which these traitors love to conceal their hideous features. Tear the mask down ! Do not enter into discussions with these rebels ! Show them that you wear your swords for a purpose, and consider that it is better one innocent man should die than that many guilty men should escape unscathed. Do not forget for a moment that the eye of our august commander-in-chief rests on you ; that you—I repeat it to impress it forcibly on your mind—that you are responsible to him alone, and that his wish and will is the only rule for what you must do and must not do. Thus, and thus only, you will be sure to please our august master ; thus and thus only you will prove yourselves worthy of your fathers, who have shed their blood for throne and altar. This is what I wished to say to you. I thank you, gentlemen !”

The parade had come to an end ; only Colonel Hohenstein, as usual, found something more to do. The sergeants on duty were running to and fro ; the company clerks wrote their tablets full ; at last the little adjutant, Baron Fitzwitz, cried : “Gentlemen, all the officers.”

The officers of the ninety-ninth infantry regiment formed a circle around their colonel, Baron Hohenstein.

The colonel looked as black as a thunder-cloud, and his voice sounded rougher and hoarser than usual as he snarled out, fixing his piercing eyes incessantly upon Wolfgang : “You have heard, gentlemen, what the general has just said. Remember it, and mind especially that in the regiment which I have the honor to command, not the faintest shadow of republican principles will be tolerated. I thank you ! Lieutenant Baron Hohenstein !”

The other officers went back to their places ; Wolfgang remained standing before the colonel.

" I only wish to tell you, my son, that you must take especial care, if you desire to wear your sword much longer at your side ! "

" I conclude from your mode of address," replied Wolfgang, " that you do not speak to me as colonel and commander of the regiment, but as my father's brother, and therefore I answer, that I cherish those republican principles which have been so violently decried, and that I do not desire to wear this sword one moment longer than I can be relieved of that honor in a suitable manner."

A dark smile flitted across the colonel's dark face.

" And if I were to speak to you not as uncle but as your commander, what then, Lieutenant Baron Hohenstein ? "

" Then I should say the same, only in a different form, colonel."

" Very well, lieutenant, very well ! May I ask for your sword, lieutenant ? "

" That means, colonel ? "

" Baron Fitzwitz ! "

" Colonel ! "

" You will carry Baron Hohenstein instantly to Fort St. Sebastian. Upon my responsibility ! I shall report the matter at once to his excellency."

" Will you please follow me, Baron Hohenstein ? " asked the aid-de-camp, who had turned very pale.

" Certainly, Baron Fitzwitz ! " said Wolfgang, and then, stepping up to the colonel, in a low voice : " You carry out the orders you have received very promptly, colonel. I hope you will take care not to let the reward escape you. It would be a pity if you had disgraced yourself for nothing. I am at your service, baron ! "

From the parade-ground it was not very far to Fort St. Sebastian. Ensign Odo, who was on guard there, made a very foolish face when the adjutant, who was still very pale, delivered to him Lieutenant Baron Hohenstein as under arrest.

As Wolfgang was walking down the long, narrow passage to the room which was assigned to officers under arrest, following the two officers, the sergeant who was behind him whispered :

"You shall not be long imprisoned, sir."

Wolfgang thought he recognized the voice of Sergeant Ruchel ; but the dim light in the passage did not allow him to convince himself whether he had been right.

A few moments later he found himself, a prisoner, in the same low, damp room from which he had a few months ago released his uncle Peter.

In the large garden-room of the "Green Glass," where, under tall chestnut-trees and thick shrubbery, beer and wine were consumed in enormous quantities, there was to-night unusual life and merriment. The jovial landlord had opened a small keg of superior wine for his special friends assembled in that room.

The jovial landlord of the "Green Glass" must have been richly blessed with special friends, for the company which had assembled there had grown by nine o'clock to the number of a hundred and fifty or two hundred. Nor could he be called very fastidious in the choice of his friends, for except a few persons who evidently belonged to the upper classes of society, the great majority were men in blouses, with powerful hands and very daring faces.

The company conversed in small groups with suppressed voices, but in the most animated manner, and here and there almost violently. It was easy to see that whatever the topic might be, the views of the persons present were divided, and that it would be a difficult task for any man to unite these hot-blooded, passionate men for one common purpose. As yet, no one seemed to feel equal to such a task ; on the contrary, there was an expression of doubt on all faces, and at the same time of intense expectation.

"They will disappoint us ; I always said so !" growled a slim fellow, with a hungry, cunning face.

"Hold your tongue !" said another ; "you want to frighten others as you are frightened."

"I frightened? Blackguard !" cried the first, knocking with his hand on the table.

"Hush, gentlemen ! Is that a way for men to talk who are doing outpost service in the face of the enemy ?" said a man who had just entered the hall in company with a friend.

"The doctor ! the doctor !" a low murmur ran through

the whole hall ; then followed deep silence. There was no doubt the man for whom they had all been waiting, had come at last, and now they would find advice and help in their uncertainty.

Munzer placed himself behind the table which had purposely been pushed close to the wall on the small side of the room, and said in a low voice, which was yet distinctly heard all over the hall : " The assembly is opened ! Before we proceed to the order of the day, I wish to present to the meeting my friend, Major Degenfeld ! "

The major, who stood by Munzer, bowed.

" I need hardly inform the meeting," continued Munzer, " that this gentleman has taken the usual oath. In the next place, I think I ought to remind you of the necessity of consulting and of acting to-day more than ever in a spirit of unity and fraternity. The order of the day is to consult on what we ought to do in view of the actual state of affairs in our land, and of the events which have just taken place in our immediate neighborhood. Has any gentleman a proposition to offer ? "

" Yes ! " said a deep voice from a dark corner in the hall. " Doctor Holm ! "

There was a great commotion in the assembly while Doctor Holm, accompanied by Peter Schmitz, made his way through the crowd towards the speaker's stand. " How did he get here ? "—" He ought not to be allowed to come here ! "—" Turn him out ! "—" Knock him down ! " Thus a hundred voices grumbled and growled all around.

Munzer had turned very pale when he heard Doctor Holm's name ; but he regained his composure quickly, and said in a rough voice : " If anybody speaks without permission from the chair, I shall instantly resign the office you have bestowed upon me. Doctor Holm has the floor ! "

Holm had ascended the speaker's stand, not without some trouble ; it consisted of a few empty barrels, on which a door had been laid. He took off his large straw-hat, first to bow to the meeting, and then more especially to wipe off the perspiration from his high forehead. Then he looked with kindly, serious eyes around in the dimly-lighted hall, and said :

" Gentlemen ! I know you wonder at my presence here,

but I trust you will not refuse one of the first founders of the Republican Club the right to attend its meetings, although I have not for some time availed myself of my privilege. To-day my friend Schmitz and I have come here, because we considered it our solemn duty to prevent by all the means in our power the forming and adopting of a resolution the execution of which will be your certain ruin. You need not murmur and cough, gentlemen, or at least do it only when I have done, for it is not easy to speak in this damp atmosphere, and the greater quiet you observe, the sooner you may hope to get rid of me again. I shall be very brief. You are all of you, I am sure, ready to fight and to die ; but you are also, all of you, clever enough neither to fight nor to risk your lives for the man in the moon. What do you care for the moon ? What do you care for the man up there ? Nothing ! You do not dream of him. And you are perfectly right not to dream of him. You are sober, sensible men ; you want none of the old mediæval stuff which they have pulled out of some old lumber-room in Frankfurth. You do not want a re-hash of the Middle Ages. You want new times ; you want a pure, democratic republic. The idea of such a republic, however, does not bear being mixed up with questions about a German empire, or this or that constitution. The republic is pure and chaste ; you must keep it jealously like the apple of your eye, like the memory of your father and mother, like the innocence of your children. Republicanism is as old as mankind, and immortal like the genius of humanity. All that is great and good upon earth has come from this source ; whatever great and good things are yet to be done on earth, must come from it. If you stand by this principle, and suffer for it all, even death, I may call you rash and thoughtless, but I shall ever respect you as men who have been true to their principles. But if you abandon this principle, you will not only lose yourselves all faith in this palladium of mankind, but you will also cease to be witnesses for the truth, and messengers of liberty for others. Therefore, I advise you, stand by simple republicanism, but do not follow the great mass of those who risk their all for a false principle, and must therefore succumb !”

Doctor Holm drew forth his red-silk handkerchief to wipe

the perspiration from his bald head, and stepped down, supported by Peter Schmitz. It was evident that the brave man's simple words had made some impression, for there followed deep silence when he had ended, and a low murmur of applause passed through the assembly. What Munzer might have thought of the speech of his former friend, could only be guessed, for he sat at his table, resting his head in his hand, and remained in the same position even while saying in a low voice: "Is it the pleasure of the assembly to discuss Doctor Holm's proposition?"

"Yes!" said Peter Schmitz.

"I shall be very brief," said Peter Schmitz, when he had mounted the platform. "I only wish, as a practical politician, to add a practical commentary to what my friend Holm, a man of ideas, has told you. He told you: 'Fight and suffer death for a principle, if it must be.' I tell you: It must not be, must not be now; and because it must not be, it shall not be! In politics success is all. An enterprise undertaken without all or any hope of success, is sure to fall under the curse of becoming ridiculous. To rise just now in arms, would be such an enterprise, doomed to failure. A year ago, I was the most zealous advocate of armed rebellion in this club. Then, when we still were in the first rapture of enthusiasm, everything was possible. But now, when the cowards remember their fears, the rich their wealth, and the powerful their might, now every hope of success has disappeared, and he who promises you success deceives himself and you."

At these words, which seemed to be aimed directly at Munzer, a threatening murmur ran through the assembly. But Peter Schmitz was not the man to be intimidated thus.

"Yes!" he cried, fixing his dark, bright eyes upon Munzer; "I repeat: deceives, intentionally or unintentionally, himself or you, or perhaps both. He does it all the more certainly as his higher intelligence must enable him to distinguish between appearances and reality, and to foresee the result of such an enterprise, which would be not an act of heroism, but a Quixotic venture; not a work in which men willingly risk their lives, but wanton sport. You may murmur and threaten as you choose at a man who dares to speak a free word according to his best knowledge and conscience!

I repeat it: he is not a hero who advises you to risk your all for naught, but a reckless or desperate gambler, be he who he may!"

Peter Schmitz had no sooner spoken the rash word than the ill-restrained indignation of Munzer's adherents broke out in a storm. They murmured and groaned and hissed and stamped, and amid the uproar the words were heard: "Down with him!"—"We'll pay him for it!"—"Don't let him leave the place alive!"

Munzer rose from his seat: "Silence!" His eyes flashed over the crowd, which obeyed but reluctantly. Then he turned to Schmitz. "Have you finished?"

"I have!" said Peter Schmitz, leaving the platform.

"Does any other gentleman wish to speak on Doctor Holm's proposition: to do nothing for the present?"

"I!" exclaimed a deep, hoarse voice, and the locksmith Christopher Unkel pushed his way through the bystanders, and leaped upon the speaker's stand.

It was a wild, weird figure, this man of the people, in his dirty blouse, with the black, bushy hair, which hung dishevelled in wild locks over the low forehead, and almost over the savagely burning eyes. Resting his enormous hands on his hips, or dealing powerful blows on the air, he stood there and cried, in a voice hoarse with rage:

"What's the use of talking? Smooth words won't do it. Who is not for us is against us, and may go to the devil! Down with the aristocrats! Down with all hypocrites! If certain people can wait till the roast pigeons come flying into their mouths, we poor folks have not time. Our wives are hungering; our children are hungering; we ourselves draw the belt tighter when it grows below, or we drown our misery in liquor. There must be an end to that. We are just as good as they; we'll show them something; we'll——"

"Citizen Unkel!" said Munzer, interrupting the raging man, "what you say is not relevant. You are out of order, and you had better let others have the floor now."

Christopher Unkel cast an angry look at Munzer, but he dared not contradict him openly, but jumped down, murmuring some unintelligible words. In his place Cajus mounted the tribune.

Cajus enjoyed great popularity in the Republican Club.

The mystery which surrounded the man captivated the crowd as much as the unchangeable dark expression which never left his face, and the fearful consistency with which he followed out the last conclusions of his radical views. At first, well known as Munzer's warmest adherent, he had by means of these qualities and their steadily increasing prominence, succeeded very soon in forming a party of his own, by means of which he not unfrequently opposed Munzer's views successfully. As soon, therefore, as his huge form, dressed in his coarse, white frieze coat, appeared on the stand, deep silence ensued.

"Unkel is right," he said ; "we have not met here to talk ; but Unkel does not know what he wants. I know it, and I will tell you. We must strike a great blow to revive our courage. This blow must be struck secretly, for we are not strong enough for open rebellion ; it must be struck promptly, or the enemy will recover from his fright, and we have risked all in vain. A quick, secret blow means a surprise, and that is what I propose. You all know Fort Sebastian ; he who holds Fort Sebastian is master of the city. The master of the city controls the province, and he who rules in the province can combine with the South and proclaim the Republic here in the West. The question is how to gain possession of Fort Sebastian ? I know a postern through which we can reach, unperceived, the guard-house of the fort. This postern will be opened to us this evening at ten o'clock by a sergeant of the guard, whom I have enlisted in our cause, after he had sworn the usual oaths according to our statutes, and for whom I engage to be personally responsible. The garrison must be cut down—as a matter of course. They count sixty men. Sixty men, surprised and scattered here and there, are easily overpowered by thirty or forty men who keep together and are not afraid of death. Once in the fort, we cannot be conquered except by starving us out. Either the town and the whole province declare in our favor—and I believe the first gun fired in honor of a republic will have that effect—or they forsake us. In the first case Germany is a republic within a month ; in the latter case we blow up the fort, with ourselves, when our last loaf of bread is consumed."

Not a feature in Cajus's dark face had changed while he

developed this terrible project, and he left the stand as calmly as he had ascended.

But his fanatical words had set the over-wrought brains on fire. A shudder ran through the whole assembly, and a low murmur of applause, interrupted by wild, incoherent words, which fell like drops of oil into a flame on the hearts of the excited crowd.

"Who desires to discuss the last proposition?" asked Munzer.

Peter Schmitz leaped upon the stand.

"I do not wish to belong any longer to an assembly which can discuss seriously, for a single moment, a project so insane, so utterly impossible of execution, so certain to bring ruin upon us all. I herewith resign my membership of this club, I ——"

The storm which had broken forth at these words of Peter Schmitz, drowned the rest. Curses and threats fell upon him from all sides; heavy hands were shaken at him, and in one corner of the hall a dense crowd formed around a man who roared louder than the others: "I must kill him, the traitor! give way!"

This was the locksmith, Christopher Unkel, who overcame by his immense bodily strength the opposition of the more sensible bystanders, and now rushed upon Schmitz, waving his large knife wildly in the air. Munzer started up from his chair and threw himself in the way of the madman. "Only across my body, Christopher; you shall not touch Peter Schmitz," he cried; "as long as I live, not a hair on his head shall be touched. Strike, if you dare!"

Christopher stood gazing at Munzer like a madman at his keeper. He dropped his weapon and slunk aside, still murmuring wild threats.

"Go!" said Munzer to Peter Schmitz and Holm; "I doubt whether I can protect you much longer!"

"You ought to come with us, Munzer," replied Holm, in a whisper; "it would be the greatest service you ever did to yourself and the good cause."

"You may be right," answered Munzer; "but what you suggest is no longer in my power. Farewell!"

He shook hands with the two men and escorted them through the crowd, who readily gave way, to the door of the

hall ; then he returned to his speaker's chair, and whispered some words to Degenfeld, who was seriously troubled and almost terrified at all he had seen and heard here, although for Munzer's sake he tried to preserve externally the greatest calmness.

"You see something must be done," whispered Munzer. "I cannot go back. Do not join your fate to mine ; leave me to my fate."

"I do not mean to forsake you," replied Degenfeld ; "but surely you cannot consent to such a mad project as that of Cajus ? Propose to these people the other plan I suggested to you on our way to this place. It is mad enough, to be sure, but it has at least a chance of success."

"And would you really help us in carrying it out ?"

"Yes !" said Degenfeld, after a short pause.

Munzer made no use whatever of his great eloquence, by which he had so often held large assemblies as if by a charm. He spoke calmly, without enthusiasm, almost coldly. He seemed to desire that his listeners should see the thing in its naked truth ; he said so, in fact, openly. "I do not wish," he said, "that anybody should hereafter come and say : 'You tempted me away from wife and children by presenting to me brilliant images of success.' All who wish to join me in the plan which I shall propose presently must leave their wives and children ; they must not ask what father or mother will say to it ; they must not mind it though the children of the world laugh them to scorn. All who follow me must leave hope behind."

He explained to them then, in a few words, the plan Degenfeld had proposed. It was simply to raise as many men as they could, to throw them into a town at some little distance, where the revolution had been momentarily successful ; and in case they should be unable to hold the place, to join the revolutionary army which was about to be organized in the South.

Generally the assembly approved of the plan, and the only objection raised concerned the question how arms could be procured in so short a time ; for the plan had to be carried out this very night, as on the following day a portion of the garrison of Cologne was to be sent against the rebellious town. All kinds of impossible propositions were made,

till at last Cajus solved the difficulty. He reminded them of the fact that Castle Rheinfeld lay on the way to that town, and that at the castle they would find one of the largest collections of arms in the country. The house was perfectly defenceless ; in half an hour the work could be done.

Joyous applause rewarded the speaker ; everybody saw himself already armed with excellent rifles, hunting knives, pistols, and daggers, and this bright prospect inflamed the courage of the more timid. Munzer and Degenfeld dared not oppose so promising a plan. The immediate gain was so evident, that moral scruples were comparatively of no weight. "He whose conscience was too tender to employ the superfluities of an aristocrat in the service of the country and of liberty, might stay at home ; the country and the cause of liberty would not be the losers."

These words, which Cajus addressed to the meeting, carried them away in rapturous applause. The expedition was decided upon ; the question arose now—How ? Here also Cajus, with his fanaticism, provided counsel, as he was evidently for the moment far more influential with the assembly than Munzer. As the gates of the city were closed at ten, the members of the club were to leave town, singly, or at best in small groups of not more than three, between nine and ten, consequently immediately after the close of the meeting, and through all the town-gates at once. A large meadow, bordering upon the highroad about a mile from town, and near the first village on the way, was agreed upon as the place of rendezvous. The conspirators were to recognize each other by the watchword "Liberty," to which the reply "Death" was to be given.

"Who left the hall just now ?" cried Munzer, who had seen a light fall from the garden into the dark room. No one, however, had noticed the person who had gone out. "There are no traitors in our midst now," cried Christopher. "You have opened the door for them yourself !"

They had all left the place through a little side door which opened from the garden upon a dark alley. Munzer and Degenfeld had been the last ; they were slowly walking down the alley.

"I appear to myself like the sorcerer's apprentice, who had conjured up a ghost and could not lay it again," said

Munzer. "The storm that fell upon us from the hot breath of these men must have its victim. I know that, and I have not resisted, but I am sorry to have drawn you into our common ruin. I am very, very sorry for that, my noble friend."

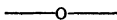
"Do you think," replied the other, "I would consider myself bound to carry out a plan which I have not voluntarily determined upon, if I saw any other way out of the dilemma? I have gone too far to retrace my steps, or to wish to do so, even if I could. Besides, what matters it, after all? I stand alone in the world, as probably few men do. I have no one to care for, except perhaps Wolfgang, who takes a real interest in me, or in whom I am really interested. I am glad now I remained true to my resolution not to initiate him further into our plans; I should not like the responsibility of having involved him in this adventure! I am alone—but you, my friend, did you think of your wife and your children?"

"I have no wife and no children!" said Munzer, gloomily.

Degenfeld touched his arm with his hand.

"You have of late hinted at such a thing repeatedly," he said. "How am I to understand that?"

"It is an old story," said Munzer. "A man loves a strange woman, or thinks he loves her, till this woman throws herself into another man's arms. In the meantime he has lost his own wife, and when he now stands there, forsaken and betrayed on all sides, and fooled by fate, what can he do better than to blow out his brains, or to find his way out of this world in some other pleasant way? And are we not about to do that? Good-by, my friend; in half an hour at the large meadow near the highroad!"



CHAPTER VII.

NEARLY at the same time when at the "Green Glass" such treasonable resolves were formed under Munzer's presidency, the city fathers were deliberating at the City Hall, under the presidency of Chief Burgomaster

Doctor Dasch, on the steps which were to be taken, under such threatening circumstances, to secure the property and the lives of the good citizens. The jovial landlord of the "Green Glass" had informed them already, in the afternoon, that the Republican Club, of which the jovial landlord was a prominent member, would hold a decisive meeting at night, in his rooms ; and in the course of the evening secret messages had arrived once or twice from there, giving accurate accounts of the progress of the debates. Each one of these messages had poured oil into the fire of excitement and anguish which burned in the hearts of the city fathers. The chief burgomaster wiped his perspiring face repeatedly, and showed himself every moment less able to direct the incessant and stormy discussions which agitated the assembly around the green table. There were just as many views as to what ought to be done, as there were heads ; the confusion was at its height. Alderman Heydman & Co., Senator Wester, and other naturally anxious minds, besought the assembly to resort at once to extreme measures, and to stifle the flame of rebellion in the blood of its authors. "We have them all together now," cried Mr. Heydman & Co., "let us strike before they strike us. With every minute of delay our danger increases. Do not think of forbearance ; the time for that is gone by ; let us summon the military and surround the hall in which the rebels are ; they are desperate men, but with help from on high, our brave soldiers will no doubt succeed in mastering them, and at the very first sign of resistance they ought to cut them down without mercy."

These bloodthirsty suggestions met with no opposition except on the part of a few, under the leadership of Lawyer Kattebolt.

"The measures proposed by the other side are as cruel as unpracticable," he exclaimed. "We may bet ten to one that this meeting of the Republican Club will come to no practical conclusion, like a great many other meetings ; and even if this were not so ; we are forewarned and can at any moment command forces infinitely superior to anything they can ever bring into the field. I am in favor of waiting till the adversary furnishes us with a good reason for attacking him ; else we shall strike the innocent with the guilty !"

"In a murderer's den there are no innocent!" cried Mr. Wester.

"Especially if we declare everybody a murderer and robber who happens to differ with us in opinion," replied Mr. Kattebolt.

These words called forth the utmost indignation of the assembled fathers. They exclaimed against unwarrantable recklessness and criminal indifference, and came little short of accusing both men of being in secret league with the "rebels."

Mr. Kattebolt was by no means disconcerted by the storm that was raging against him.

"What do you want of me, gentlemen?" he said. "You act as if I, a single man, could prevent you from carrying out your purposes. Do what you think you ought to do, but consider that your excessive apprehensions conjure up the very danger which you wish to avoid, that violent measures will only add fuel to the excitement, and give the whole thing an importance which I, and I believe every sober-minded man, think it does not deserve. This fire will go out if you do not feed it; but if you put your foot incautiously upon the embers, the sparks will be sure to fly about, and you need not wonder if your houses and your factories are burnt to the ground, and despair commits deeds such as mere discontent would never have conceived."

"You can talk," cried Mr. Wester, "for you have no factories to be burnt."

"Is it a crime, perhaps, not to be a factory owner?"

The storm arose once more with increased fury; the chief burgomaster rang his bell in vain; and who knows what ridiculous and disgraceful scenes might yet have taken place amid the excited city fathers, if at that moment Pitter, the messenger, had not rushed in, with deadly-pale countenance, to whisper a message into the chief burgomaster's ear.

Anxious silence immediately reigned in the terrified assembly.

Mr. Willibrod Dasch rose and said in a voice which terror had made hoarse and almost inaudible: "Gentlemen! The landlord of the 'Green Glass' is without, and wishes to be heard; he brings news of the utmost importance from the Republican Club. I pray, gentlemen, receive his report

with becoming calmness and composure. Bring the man in, Pitter !”

The jovial landlord of the “Green Glass,” honest Mr. Putz, came into the council-room, ushered by the messenger, bowed awkwardly to the assembled fathers, and grinned all over his ugly face.

“Sit down, Mr. Putz,” groaned the burgomaster, “and tell us what you have to report.”

“Not much that is good, gentlemen,” he replied, after having availed himself of the permission to sit down ; “the cat is out of the bag, and you will have trouble enough to put it back again. At this very moment they are all leaving town, through all the town-gates at once, two or three thousand men. Then they march to Castle Rheinfeld, where old General Hohenstein lives ; there they mean to procure arms, and after that to ring the tocsin of rebellion in all the surrounding villages. Then they want to come back with the peasants and set the city on fire in every district, till not a stone remains standing ; and then they want to kill everybody who resists ; only the women and the money are to be distributed equally. Yes, gentlemen, our little money ! Above all, they mean to plunder the safes of the merchants and all the rich people. It is awful, gentlemen, I tell you. My hair stands on end when I think of what I have heard. It’s awful, I tell you.”

The jovial landlord grinned once more ; then he recollected how little that agreed with his words, and suddenly assumed a solemn air, crossing himself and lifting up his swollen, twinkling eyes to the ceiling.

The fathers looked at each other ; this was beyond their worst apprehensions. Alderman Heydman & Co. wrung his hands and said he was undone. In vain did Mr. Kattebolt represent how improbable some of the landlord’s statements were, and how unreliable altogether a man was who thus became a traitor to his own party. They cried that they had heard enough of his advice, that he ought to be silent now, and not make himself more liable still to being suspected. The common distress restored unanimity among the others very promptly. In a surprisingly short time the necessary measures had been agreed upon. A deputation was to wait on General Count Hinkel-Gackel, the commandant of the

city, to ask him to order the town-gates to be closed at once, and a sufficiently strong force to go in pursuit of the rebels, in order to surprise them, if possible, before they could reach Rheinfeld, and to cut them down without mercy. For the town itself other measures were proposed. As the expedition to Rheinfeld could not be expected back before twelve o'clock, an order was issued that from that hour every window should be suitably lighted up, and the public buildings should be occupied by all the troops which the commanding officer could spare. Besides this, all public funds should be immediately examined by special commissioners and transported to safe places ; so that if they could not be protected finally against the lawless murderers, and a general sack should take place, the means would at least be on hand to ascertain the precise amount of loss inflicted by the banditti !

When the deputation had been chosen to wait on the commandant, and they were on the point of nominating special commissioners to examine the books and the funds in the town treasury, it was found to the astonishment of many members that Alderman Hohenstein had disappeared during the boundless confusion which had for some time prevailed in the room. It could not be ascertained at what period of the transactions he had left. Some thought they had seen him only a few minutes ago ; others insisted upon his having absented himself more than half an hour since. But all recollected that he had shown unusual apathy during the discussion, and that he had looked very pale and haggard. They agreed that he had probably felt unwell, and had gone home quietly so as to avoid making a sensation. They regretted that they had to disturb him, as his presence was of course absolutely necessary during the examination of the treasury. One of the council messengers was, therefore, sent off to request Alderman Baron Hohenstein to come back, and if that should be impossible, to send at least the keys of the treasury.

After these measures had been taken, the burgomaster sent off the different deputations, while the remaining members of the city council declared themselves *en permanence* under the presidency of their much-tried chief.

CHAPTER VIII.

AS soon as one of the alderman's special adversaries had suggested the examination of the treasury, he had risen from the council-table and joined a small group of colleagues who were too deeply excited to keep their seats quietly. Then he had walked towards the door, apparently only to stretch his legs after sitting so long, and had left the room, favored by the indifferent light in the enormous hall, without being observed, at the moment when the proposed measure had been adopted by acclamation.

He passed the few persons whom he met in the ante-room and the great hall of the building, very swiftly. In the consternation, which had already spread from the council-hall to the clerks and messengers, no one paid any attention to him. When he reached the square, he drew a long breath ; he was comparatively safe now ; they could not easily overtake him. And even if they had cut off the retreat to his home, the river could be reached in a few minutes by some of the by-streets. Who could stop him if he were to run up the bridge to some distance, and then throw himself suddenly over the railing ?

He paused and looked back at the council-hall ; the light was shining dimly through the high windows ; he thought he saw several persons approach the windows and look down upon the square. They would find it difficult to discover him in the darkness ; but every minute he lost made it less easy for him to carry out his plan, and so he hurriedly took the way home. He found a kind of satisfaction in the thought that he would be able to blow out his brains like a gentleman, in his own room, on his own sofa, and with his own pistols. Death itself he feared little.

He had familiarized himself with the thought of death for several months. The hope he had cherished at first, that with assistance from the general he might be able to replace the stolen sum, had grown weaker and weaker as the relations between Wolfgang and Camilla had become cooler. He had observed them carefully, and had long been convinced that Wolfgang's engagement could as little endure

for any length of time as his connection with the army. He was too expert a gambler not to know that he would lose his game. As long as Margaret had lived, this thought had been a terror to him; and since her death, the idea of escaping disgrace by suicide had lost much of its horror. He had loved Margaret as much as his vain, selfish heart could love, and he would have hesitated long before inflicting such sorrow upon her; he would have shrunk especially from appearing so small in her eyes, after having tried all his life long to impress her with his noble descent, his refinement, and his sagacity. All these motives lost their power with Margaret's death, and the event itself had been in some respects a relief to him—at least after he had overcome the first great sincere sorrow. Whatever might happen now, those gentle brown eyes that looked so often searchingly at him, would no longer see it. Of Wolfgang he hardly thought at all, and when he did so, with very different feelings. He had never looked upon him as he had looked upon his wife. Already, as a boy, Wolfgang's earnestness and vigorous truthfulness had extorted from him a respect which proved at times uncomfortable to his feelings, and this sensation had increased in later years, till he saw in the young man a strange being, whom he could hardly comprehend. Wolfgang, he knew, could find his way through the world, and—so strangely had the ideas of the good and the true become confused in his mind—he imagined the romance of the suicide would give him a heroic air in the eyes of his son! It was a deed, and he had always instinctively felt that Wolfgang suspected him of not being energetic enough to do a deed.

In spite of all these things he had postponed this last deed, which was to pay all debts, and to atone for all sins, from day to day, with that indecision which had never left him during all his life, until the moment when decision was no longer in his power, and circumstances forced him with irresistible power to choose one way or another. No doubt he would have dragged himself along on his painful path for some time yet, if to-day blow upon blow had not fallen, one after another, to rob him of the last faint ray of hope.

This morning the old general at Rheinfeld had written to him, in reply to a letter of congratulation on his release,

that he expected all the sums he had lent him during the last year to be repaid promptly now. The letter was peremptory and rude in the extreme. Enclosed in the same envelope he had found a note in the handwriting of the president's wife, who informed him that circumstances of recent occurrence made it expedient to annul the agreement concerning Wolfgang and Camilla, and that further explanations on this subject could not well be given now, but would in due time be furnished to the "alderman and his esteemed son."

With these letters in his pocket, the alderman had in vain waited a long time for Wolfgang's return from parade, and then started to the City Hall to attend the meeting which had taken such a terrible turn. To have the treasury examined was for him, who had in the meantime taken nearly fifty thousand dollars, nothing less than imprisonment, trial, and confinement in the penitentiary for life. Fate had played the last trump against him; the game was lost!

The alderman reached his house almost breathless from his haste to return. His first inquiry was after Wolfgang. Good-natured Ursula, who managed the small household since Margaret's death, alone, had red eyes, and broke out in tears when she saw her master. "My good mistress would turn in her grave," she said, "if she were to live through this hour!" At last she succeeded in checking her grief so far as to tell the alderman that during the afternoon a couple of officers had been here to search every drawer and cupboard in young master's room, and that his servant had taken a supply of linen and some clothes to the guard-house. There was a note, she added, on the alderman's table, written by young master.

The alderman went to his room; near the lighted lamp lay a short note from Wolfgang, written in pencil: "Dear father!—I have been arrested—I know not why. Do not trouble yourself about me. I hope to be free again very soon!"

That too! Must all misfortunes fall upon him at once? What could Wolfgang have done? The alderman's mind was too seriously disturbed to allow him to dwell on that question. He only felt a vague kind of satisfaction at the event. It was evident that Fate was persecuting him in the

most extraordinary manner, and was bent upon his ruin. To escape from a world so shockingly unjust—if one had only the courage to take the last irrevocable step!—that was a resolve which the world could not help approving. And it was all the better that Wolfgang was away from home just now; his presence in the house might have been inconvenient. Now he had only to get rid of Ursula. But how? Could he send her to the guard-house? Fort Sebastian was at the other end of the town; even if she was not admitted, it would take her at least an hour to go and come back.

He wrote a few words to his son—anything that occurred to him on the spur of the moment. At the “Good-by, my son!” he started for a moment; but he had no time to dwell on the special meaning of these words. He must have lost ten minutes since he had entered the house; he calculated that he had only fifteen minutes start of his pursuers.

He almost pushed the half-frightened Ursula out of the house. Then he locked the front door and pushed the bolt, went into his room, locked that door also and bolted it, closed the window-shutters, screwed them as tight as he could—and now he was alone.

Alone!—it gave him a sense of delight! The unhappy man felt that now there was nobody any more between him and his fate; no one could arrest his arm; no one could jeer at him; no one tell him to his face that Arthur Baron Hohenstein had stolen fifty thousand dollars from funds entrusted to his care, and that he had cheated his creditors out of nearly the same sum! A hundred thousand dollars! A mere song! It was after all ridiculous to take his life for such a trifle! He recalled the time when he was an officer in the army, and when one of his brother officers had in one year contracted debts to the amount of three hundred thousand dollars, and was looked upon by all of his comrades as a kind of hero, especially when he shortly afterwards married a great heiress, who brought him a clear million! That was living as it became a nobleman! Another friend of his had even spent four hundred thousand, but unfortunately ended by blowing out his brains. But still, that was worth the trouble! But he! He had never in his life achieved any really great success. All he had done, had been want-

ing in energy and greatness. Whenever he had meant to live for pleasure only, his conscience had waked up and marred the enjoyment; and whenever he had tried to live in simple honesty, the memory of his former splendor had disturbed his peace till he had once more abandoned his good purposes. What had he after all gained by his noble descent, his great family connections, which reached up to the very highest regions, what by his early beauty, his worldly cleverness? Nothing! Nothing whatever! They had brought him here, here before the open box with pistols!

He took out one of the pistols, pushed the ramrod down, and convinced himself that it was loaded. Then he took off the cap and put on a new one. Thus prepared for the worst, he fell into the comfortable arm-chair, and looked with a certain ironical satisfaction at the elegant surroundings. The old engravings after great masters, the superb busts upon graceful consoles and pedestals, the richly-carved furniture, the warm velvet on sofas and chairs, the magnificent carpet, which he had recently bought and not yet paid for—these were surroundings suitable for a man of his taste and his pretensions. Why had fate not placed him so that he could have enjoyed all these things comfortably, as so many others did who were not a whit better than he was? He had not been born to work and to toil, like his brother-in-law Peter Schmitz! And what had Peter Schmitz accomplished by all his toil and his honesty? A poor man he had been, and a poor man he was still; but then, Peter Schmitz was a born plebeian and had a talent for poverty. "I have no such talent, and do not desire to have it. Arthur Hohenstein was not born to plague himself like a slave."

A violent ring at the door-bell made him start up suddenly from his chair. He laid his hand on his pistols; his heart beat violently.

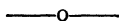
And another ring—louder than before.

He knew what this ringing meant; he saw the police officer and his sergeants stand around the door. He saw himself carried a prisoner down the street to the City Hall, and entering as a prisoner the same rooms in which he had so recently sat in council; he saw the amazed and indignant faces of his former colleagues.

And now a knock at the door.

He put the mouth of the pistol to his temple—the next moment he lay a mutilated corpse on the magnificent unpaid-for carpet.

The messenger who had been sent to summon the alderman heard the explosion. A sudden fright seized the man, who had felt uncomfortable enough already in the deserted street before the closely-shut-up house and opposite the dark trees of the convent garden with the night-wind rustling in their branches. He ran away as fast as he could to inform the gentlemen at the City Hall of what he had heard.



CHAPTER IX.

WOLFGANG had spent the first hours of his captivity in a state of excitement very natural under the circumstances. Without being conscious of any special misdeed, he could not consider himself innocent in the sense which his accusers attached to his acts. His intimacy with Degenfeld and Munzer, the frequent interviews he had had with other leaders of the republican party, his friendship for Uncle Peter, his recent adventure at Antonia's villa—if this circumstance should be mentioned in the course of his trial, as was probable!—his correspondence, his written essays on political subjects, which would no doubt be seized with his other papers, all this was more than enough to secure him condemnation before a court martial.

But the prospect of a fate which might have terrified others, had little in it to trouble the young man. What pained him was the thought that he might be accused of having acted equivocally or even deceitfully. He ought never to have entered into relations which were always more or less incompatible with his convictions; he ought to have left the army as soon as he saw clearly that he could not remain in it with honor. What could he reply if he were told so?

The burning blush of shame rose to the young man's face, as he arrived at this point in his thoughts. He started up

from his seat and walked vehemently up and down in the narrow cell.

"What can I reply? What could I say in defence? Nothing but a candid profession of faith—that is a duty I owe to myself. I will tell them exactly what I think of the present state of things; I will say what no one yet has dared to say; I will hold up before their eyes their petty tyranny, their narrow-minded pedantry, their rotten prejudices—let them do with me then what they choose!"

Wolfgang gave himself up to his imagination. He saw himself standing before his judges; he prepared in his mind the speech he was to deliver. But then it occurred to him that, after all, a speech was a small thing in comparison with a genuine deed, such as becomes a man. And what could such a speech do? What had Degenfeld's enthusiastic, clever pamphlet done? Nothing, absolutely nothing! At best, it had only confirmed these narrow-minded, short-sighted men in their disgraceful prejudices.

What would he have given at this moment to be able to offer his arm and his life to the great cause? While he was distressing himself here in this narrow cell, with useless meditations and idle fancies, others were shedding their blood in open, honest conflict for the cause of liberty! . . . "Oh, Munzer! oh, Degenfeld! You gave me bad advice! You have kept the lion's share for yourself, and given me a bone, at which I may gnaw. Oh that I had followed the voice of my heart! I should not be a prisoner here now, like a bird in his cage, who in vain beats his wings against the bars!"

The noise of a key turning in the lock attracted his attention. The door was opened cautiously, and Sergeant Ruchel slipped into the room.

Wolfgang had imagined that the comforting words he had heard whispered to him in the dark passage, had been a well-meant encouragement on the part of some subordinate; he had not dreamed of building upon it a hope of delivery. The unexpected presence of the well-built, black-eyed man, of whose devotion he had had repeated proofs, filled him with a kind of joyous terror.

"Is it you, Ruchel?" he said, seizing eagerly his visitor's hand. "How do you happen to be here, as your regiment is not on duty to-day?"

"Combined detachments, lieutenant!" replied Ruchel; "reported specially to the adjutant—but speak lower, lieutenant; the walls have ears. Do you desire to be free, lieutenant?"

"How can you ask?" replied Wolfgang, in a whisper.

"I mean, are you disposed to do something yourself for your delivery?" inquired the sergeant.

"Whatever a man can do!"

"Then be ready about ten o'clock. The Republican Club is preparing a great blow. I can say no more. It must not even be known that I am here. I shall have to bring you your supper in the presence of the ensign; ask me then to bring you your things from your rooms; that will reassure him. At ten o'clock I shall be back. Be ready then."

Sergeant Ruchel listened at the door to hear if anybody was in the passage; then he slipped out swiftly and noiselessly as he had come.

Those were painful hours which Wolfgang spent till night came. The great sensation which his flight would produce if he should be successful, the great danger to which he was exposed if he failed, the impression which his fate would make on all who stood near to him—on his father, on Munzer and Degenfeld, on Uncle Peter, Aunt Bella, and Ottilia—all this passed again and again through his mind, but he never wavered in his determination to risk everything for the sake of freedom. The ambiguous position in which he had been so long, had become so intolerable to him that even death seemed preferable to him.

His thoughts dwelt longest on the dear house in River street. To have to part with Ottilia without bidding her farewell, seemed to him almost an impossibility. If he had never known that he loved Ottilia, he would have found it out now. Her beloved form would again and again present itself before his mind's eye, amid all the varied images which his excited imagination conjured up. He saw her turn pale as she heard of his imprisonment, and rosy red when the news came of his successful flight; and then he returned triumphant, proclaiming the victory of liberty, and held her in his arms, and called her his darling, his future wife! Liberty and Ottilia—they were his two loves! These two stars should henceforth be his guides through life.

The appearance of his cousin, Ensign Odo, and of Sergeant Ruchel, the former of whom asked if he had any special wishes, while the latter served his frugal supper, reminded Wolfgang that he had for the present not yet begun that brilliant career. He requested his cousin—whose stolid face looked, on this occasion, twice as stupid as usual—to send an open note, which he had written in pencil, to his father ; and to let him have, through his own servant, some linen, and other articles, of which he had made a list on another paper. Cousin Odo declared that there was no objection to either request, and then left him with his companion, who had, during the whole scene, affected a harsh, almost uncourteous manner, towards the prisoner.

Wolfgang could not but be amused at the absurd condescension which Odo assumed. The young man was evidently acting in concert with his family, perhaps under special orders from his father. As soon as they no longer saw in him the favorite of the old general, their true face reappeared. Wolfgang was amazed that he should have ever allowed himself to be imposed upon by the hypocritical friendliness of his noble relatives. He tried to eat something of the supper that had been brought, but the prisoners' fare was not to his taste. Tired of walking up and down, he threw himself on the hard couch, and had not been long lying there when the reaction after so great an excitement made him fall asleep in spite of his efforts to remain awake.

He felt a hand touching his shoulders, and started up. It was Ruchel, who in the perfect darkness whispered to him : " It is time ; we must be gone ; are you ready ? "

" Yes ! "

" Give me your hand and step softly ! "

They went from the room down the dark and narrow passage. At the end of the latter, Ruchel unlocked a door, through which they passed into a small court-yard, from which a second door, which was also unlocked by the sergeant, led to a long, covered passage, leading, through many zigzag windings, along the fortifications, to the wall of the bastion.

" Now, quickly up the wall, and on the other side down to the hedge," whispered Ruchel.

They crept up the rather steep wall, and glided down the other side till they reached a thick hedge, which followed, at the foot of the wall, the deep, broad fosse.

"Remain close behind me!" whispered Ruchel.

They ran along the hedge for about a hundred yards; then they came to an opening, where a little boat, belonging to the person charged with the keeping of the walls and fosses, was moored to a post.

"If we can cross the fosse unobserved, the worst is over," said Ruchel. "I hope the sentinel up near the old block-house will not see us. At the worst we must let him fire at us. But before the fellow makes up his mind, we shall be over."

It came exactly as Ruchel had predicted. Cautiously as they proceeded, they could not avoid making some little noise as they tried to undo the chain which secured the boat. The sentinel at that post was a young man, who took his instructions in good earnest. He stepped to the edge of the wall and looked down. Fortunately the hedge was at that place higher than elsewhere, so that the boat was nearly one-third across before the sentinel saw it. Between that point, however, and the shadow of the trees on the glacis opposite, there was a broad space lying in the clear light of the moon, which had just risen. The boat entered upon this bright space.

"Halt!" cried the soldier.

"Pull, pull, lieutenant!" said Ruchel, standing at the rudder.

"Halt!" cried the sentinel once more.

The bow of the boat was in the shadow.

A flash and an explosion; the ball fell behind the boat into the water.

"Hurrah!" cried Ruchel, joyously waving his cap; "before he has reloaded, we are across."

They landed on the other side and ran through the plantations. Ruchel had taken Wolfgang by the hand.

"I am more at home here," he said, "and we must not miss the place where Cajus is waiting."

Wolfgang did not inquire how Cajus happened to be there, in the excitement of the moment; everything seemed natural which served to aid them in their flight.

They passed through the wood, which was intersected by walks, till they reached a place where several benches were placed in a circle. As they left the trees, Cajus came to meet them ; he had been sitting on one of these benches.

He had a bundle in his hand.

"You are quite late, Ruchel," he said, in his rough, harsh manner ; "five minutes more and you would not have found me."

"We couldn't come sooner, darling," replied Ruchel. "I had to lock up too many prisoners. It was like a dovecot to-day."

"We shall have to be in a hurry if we wish to overtake the others," growled Cajus. "Make haste and change your clothes."

Cajus had untied the bundle and taken out the clothes it contained.

"They are your own things," he said. "Your servant gave them to me. This is for you, Ruchel !"

They quickly exchanged their uniforms for citizen's dress. Ruchel jumped on one of the benches and hung the things they had pulled off on a branch.

"The good people of Nuremberg never hang a man till they have caught him," he said in his exultation.

Cajus scolded. "No nonsense, Ruchel !" said Wolfgang.

A gun was fired from the fort.

Ruchel jumped down from the bench.

"Now they are in earnest," he said. "Who has the longest legs ?"

The three men hastened out of the little wood across the highroad, into a small path which led them past gardens and houses into the open fields. When they reached these, Cajus, who was now the leader, moved to the right till they struck the river. Then they went as fast as they could along the tow-path, between the water on one side and the low banks on the other.

Wolfgang heard now from Ruchel, who was walking by his side, while silent Cajus preceded them by a few yards, how his escape had been managed. The merry fellow said very little about his offer to put the conspirators in possession of the fort ; perhaps he was afraid Wolfgang might yet look up on such treason with the eyes of the officer. "But for your

servant, lieutenant," he said, "the thing would not have been so easy. When he brought your night-things at nine o'clock, I gave him a note to Cajus to let him know that you were a prisoner, and that if the surprise of the fort should not succeed, we, I mean you and I, would be on the glacis at eleven, from where the members of the Republican Club must help us further. I knew that they intended to do something of importance to-night, for Cajus had told me so. Yes, yes, one may rely on those gentlemen; they are the men for something of the kind, and therefore I am determined to join them, come what may."

"But where does Cajus lead us?" asked Wolfgang.

"I do not know," said Ruchel. "I did not like to ask him; do you ask him, lieutenant!"

Cajus's sharp ears must have heard the conversation, for he suddenly moderated his steps and said, when the two had come up: "I have been ordered by Munzer and Degenfeld, who have gone ahead with about two hundred of our men, to escort you to our corps, if you say so."

"Certainly, that is my wish," said Wolfgang, his heart beating with delight at the idea of thus reaching the scene of conflict at once; "and where does the corps go to?"

Cajus mentioned the name of the town in which the republicans had risen, and which they proposed to succor.

Wolfgang needed no long explanation to know what was to be done. He had discussed only the night before the chances of such an expedition with Munzer and Degenfeld. It is true, he had not then believed that this dream would so soon become a reality, and still less that he would himself be connected with the enterprise.

"But where can we get arms?" he asked.

"We are just on the way to fetch them," replied Cajus.

Wolfgang would have liked to hear more about it, but Cajus fell back into his morose reticence, and Wolfgang sought consolation in the near prospect of joining his friends.

In the meantime a thunder-storm came up, and made the night still darker, and the road, at best not very comfortable, still more difficult. At last it commenced to rain, first gently, then harder, and finally in torrents. Wolfgang began to feel a certain lassitude in all his limbs; the result, no doubt,

of his having eaten nothing since the morning. Even Rachel stopped telling funny stories and humming his favorite songs for his own amusement, as he had been doing all the time. Only Cajus walked on with undiminished vigor, and even faster than before.

"The darkness is good enough, but the rain is very bad," he said. "If that goes on so for an hour, we shall not have twenty of the two hundred left."

"I wonder," said Wolfgang, "why you have chosen this road for the expedition. What you gain in safety, you lose in time."

"Till we have arms, safety is the main point," replied Cajus.

"But where are you to find arms on this road?"

"At Rheinfeld, in your granduncle's armory," replied Cajus.

Wolfgang started. Munzer and Degenfeld had not told him a word, last night, of this part of their plan.

"Whose was that idea?" he exclaimed.

"Mine," was the laconic reply.

"They will not surrender them willingly," said Wolfgang.

"Then we must take them by force," answered Cajus.

Wolfgang was silent. The prospect of having to meet his granduncle, perhaps even Camilla and her mother, under such circumstances, was inexpressibly painful to him. But he saw no means of escape from this embarrassment. After he had once taken the first step, throwing himself into the arms of the revolution, he had to take the consequences of that step, whatever they might be.

Nor did he have much time to reflect, for lights suddenly appeared in the profound darkness on his left side and at very little distance, proving that they were near the château.

"Here you are more at home than I am," said Cajus, halting; "will you lead us to the house?"

"Follow me!" said Wolfgang, resolutely.

He left the road near the river-bank and walked on the well-known path along the park enclosure to the gate which opened upon the court-yard.

At the gate they were hailed by a sentinel.

"Liberty!" replied Cajus.

"Pass on!" said the sentinel.

"How are matters here?" asked Cajus.

"Not very well. Half of them have run away; the other half never came."

"Thought so!" growled Cajus. "The plan never was worth anything."

They entered the court-yard, which presented a strange appearance. About fifty men were standing about, strangely lighted up by the flame of a heap of dry wood which had been kindled. They were distributing weapons; from the wide-open front-door men were coming out, bearing still more arms. Munzer was near the fire and superintended the distribution. He greeted Wolfgang with a pressure of the hand, and, as it seemed to the young man, with a very sad smile.

"I am glad to see you here," he said, "although matters are going on badly. The men are getting tired and want to run off. Degenfeld is in the armory and wastes our time in selecting particularly good weapons. Go to him and tell him I should be glad if he would make an end there and let us go on. We must leave, or we may be caught."

Wolfgang himself was very anxious to get away from a place which he would rather never have entered. He hastened, therefore, to execute his commission before he should be recognized by any of the inmates of the château.

He hurried through the large hall and then down the long, narrow passage. He met a number of persons who were carrying off arms, and when he admonished them to make haste, they replied, scornfully, that the plundering had scarcely begun yet. When he entered the garden-room, which was as scantily lighted by a few candles hastily placed here and there as the hall and the passage, he heard from the general's room, on the opposite side, the crying of women, violent scolding and cursing of men, and between, if he erred not, Degenfeld's voice, which seemed trying in vain to make itself heard above the din and uproar. Wolfgang pushed the half-open door, and a glance sufficed to show him what was going on there.

Degenfeld stood with his back against the general's bureau, which had been broken open, with a pistol in his right hand, which he aimed at a crowd of men, who, under the leadership of the locksmith, Christopher Unkel, pressed

upon him with wild cries and savage gestures. All around him on the floor lay broken mirrors, valuable jewelry, and other things, showing that the plundering had been at its height when Degenfeld had entered.

Near one of the windows, and partly covered by Degenfeld, sat on his bath-chair the old general, wrapped in his fur cloak ; while Camilla and her mother stood by him with weeping eyes, and their wrappers partially torn, as if they also had not escaped personal insults when they were so rudely awakened from their slumbers.

There was no doubt that Degenfeld's life was in serious danger. Not only Christopher Unkel, but his accomplices also, were armed with swords, guns, and hatchets, which they had just stolen, and their words and gestures proved that they had a great desire to use these weapons, taken in the name of liberty, against the life of their own leader.

"Down with him !" yelled Christopher Unkel. "We don't want to be ordered by a rascally aristocrat. Get away, there, from the women, or we'll knock your brains out !"

"Help ! help !" screamed the president's wife ; "for God's sake, Major Degenfeld, save us !"

Wolfgang had snatched a rifle from the hands of the nearest person, and was in an instant at Degenfeld's side.

"Back !" he cried, seizing the rifle by the barrel and preparing to strike.

"There is another aristocrat !" cried a voice from the crowd. "Knock him down !" Whirling an immense crow-bar around his head, and uttering a yell of rage, Christopher Unkel rushed upon Degenfeld. Degenfeld fired. Christopher fell, face forward, dead or mortally wounded.

When the others saw their leader fall, they rushed in wild flight out of the room. Degenfeld bent over the fallen man. The powerful arm which he lifted, fell like lead on the floor.

"He would have it !" murmured Degenfeld.

Then raising himself again, he said to Wolfgang in a sad voice :

"Do you, dear Wolfgang, protect the ladies, in case the rascals should come back again. I must see Munzer. Perhaps we shall not meet again. Then, farewell !"

He pressed Wolfgang's hand, bowed to the general and the half-fainting ladies, and left the room.

Wolfgang went up to his granduncle and said : " Are you strong enough to go in the adjoining room ? "

The old man stared at him with unmeaning eyes, and mechanically extended his bony hands. Wolfgang took him by the arm, drew him up from his chair, and led him into the next room, his bed-chamber. The president's wife and Camilla followed.

Wolfgang helped the old general to sit down in his arm-chair.

The president's wife, throwing herself into another chair, stretched out her hands towards Wolfgang as if to ask his pardon, and made an effort to smile upon him in her old gracious way. Camilla threw herself on his bosom.

" Pardon me," he said, coldly ; " but you are entirely mistaken."

" My dear son, you are not going to be angry still ? " exclaimed Camilla's mother, her eyes welling over with tears.

" Rid me of these banditti, my boy ! " cried the old man, " and you shall have the girl, even if that old fox, the doctor, should have to go to the devil."

Camilla covered her face with her hands.

" I regret to have to explain to you the mistake under which you are all laboring," said Wolfgang. " You must know that I as well as Major Degenfeld belong to these banditti ; although, as you see, we do not take the matter in your sense of the word. I have just escaped from prison ; you will hardly wish to marry a deserter, Miss Camilla."

" Oh, my God, he is going to murder us ! " cried the mother.

Camilla threw herself at her feet and hid her beautiful face in her mother's lap.

" That is your doing, wretched woman ! " said the general.

" I absolve these ladies from such a reproach," said Wolfgang. " I leave Miss Camilla perfectly free, as she has already chosen elsewhere, if I am correctly informed. You will permit me to cut short this painful scene and to look after my friends."

" He is going to murder us ! " cried the president's wife once more.

At that moment a shot was heard, and then a second, and

a third, and then a regular platoon fire, so that the window-panes rattled.

Wolfgang hurried out of the chamber and through the other room where the dead body of the locksmith was still lying on the carpet, into the garden-room, where he met Ruchel.

"God be thanked that I find you!" exclaimed the faithful fellow; "we cannot get into the court-yard; they are on my heels!"

The step of soldiers rushing up the passage confirmed his words. There was but one outlet—through the glass-door into the park. Wolfgang led his companion to the door. Fortunately it was not locked. It was high time: the balls that were fired after them passed through the glass so that the splinters flew around their heads.

"Where are our people?" asked Wolfgang, when they had reached the edge of the little lake in their hurried flight.

"God knows!" replied Ruchel. "All is upside down!"

"We must look for them," said Wolfgang.

"I follow wherever you lead," replied Ruchel.

The firing, which had at first come from the court-yard, now grew weaker, and seemed to come rather from the other side of the park and the vineyard, which lay between the park and the village of Rheinfeld.

"Follow me," said Wolfgang. "I know the shortest way."

"I am coming," replied Ruchel.

They had not gone fifty yards from the lake, when they were fired upon from the right. They turned to the left. "Halt!" said a voice, and again guns were fired quite close by. Fortunately they were protected by the darkness, which was still very deep under the trees and in the thick shrubbery, although the rain had ceased, and the moon was once more shining in the heavens.

"They have formed a chain all around the château," whispered Ruchel; "we shall have to try and slip through somewhere."

They remained perfectly quiet for a few minutes, in order to find out, if possible, how the men were posted. When they thought they knew where the nearest stood, they crept cautiously forward, and thus reached safely the edge of the

wood, which here surrounded a large lawn with a decayed pavilion in the centre. The moon was shining brightly upon the open place, and glittered on the bayonets of nearly half a company of soldiers, the other half having been detached to form the chain which they had just passed successfully. While they were still considering what they would better do, the firing in the vineyards, which had almost ceased for a time, began to be more lively again. The captain of the company ordered the bugle-men to give the signal to rally, and Wolfgang and Ruchel knew at once that the tirailleurs would now fall back upon the main body, thus placing them between two fires.

"There is nothing left but to lie perfectly quiet and to see if they won't pass us," whispered Ruchel.

"I think we had better creep along the edge of the lawn," replied Wolfgang. A few yards from the spot there, where the big trees are standing close together, there is a little gate in the park enclosure, so closely overgrown with creepers that nobody knows where it is."

"Very well!" replied Ruchel.

Under the protection of the deep shadow of the trees they crept very cautiously along the edge of the lawn, and had nearly reached the spot pointed out by Wolfgang, when they suddenly came across a patrol, who had been sent off in that direction, and who were now waiting, their guns at rest, having heard the cracking of dry branches, and thinking they would meet another patrol from the nearest outpost.

"We must fight our way through!" whispered Wolfgang.

"All right!" replied Ruchel.

"Halt! Who is that?" cried the commander of the patrol.

"Friends!" replied Wolfgang, falling at the same time upon the startled man and tearing the gun from his hands. Ruchel rushed upon a second man. A struggle followed. Despair gave additional strength to the two aggressors. They threw or pushed aside all who opposed them, and had soon reached the little gate. But they could not get out unobserved, for the pursuers were close upon their heels. Outside the park, for the whole distance to the village, there were only a few trees on one side of the canal; thus they had no shelter there, and their position was even worse than before. In-

deed, they had hardly run half the distance, when the soldiers broke open the little gate and rushed after them, calling to each other for mutual encouragement, and evidently quite sure of their prey. At the same time the beating of drums was heard from the village ; so there also were soldiers ! Every hope of escape seemed to be cut off.

"Let us wait for them to come up, and sell our lives as dear as we can !" cried Wolfgang.

"All right !" replied Ruchel.

Suddenly a figure stood behind them, which had turned up as if by magic from the ruins of the old village wall, thickly overgrown as they were with briars and brambles.

"It is I, Balthasar !" said a voice, the peculiar soft ring of which Wolfgang had never forgotten. "Quick, young master, you and whoever is with you ! Follow me, and not a soul shall touch a hair on your head."

Balthasar seized Wolfgang's hand, and drew him into the bushes. Ruchel followed them closely.

"Now down on your knees and creep after me !" said Balthasar.

Wolfgang repeated the injunction to Ruchel.

"All right !" said Ruchel.

They crept on all fours through a crevice between piled-up stones. It was so narrow that Wolfgang had repeatedly trouble to force his broad shoulders through it. Ruchel also seemed to find it difficult, for he growled considerably, and then again made funny remarks about their dangerous position.

"Now halt !" cried Balthasar.

"Halt !" said Wolfgang.

"All right !" said Ruchel.

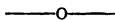
"Now we climb up a ladder of ten rounds," said Balthasar, leading the way. Wolfgang followed, then Ruchel, who at Balthasar's request drew the ladder up after him.

They were able now to stand upright. Balthasar lit a small lantern. They found themselves in a narrow passage, about four feet wide and six feet high, which led, first gradually, and then more steeply, upwards to a heavy iron door, which Balthasar opened and then locked again behind them with key and bolt. They were now in a cellar-like space, which was so large that Balthasar's lantern, with its feeble light, did

not show them more than a few feet around them. Out of this room a very narrow and steep flight of steps, which had been built in the thickness of the wall, led them into another narrow passage, and from thence, by means of a short ladder and a trap-door, into the room in the tower where Wolfgang had been before. Balthasar drew up the little ladder, let down the door, placed the lantern on a table, and welcomed Wolfgang most cordially, taking him by both hands.

“Did I not tell you,” he exclaimed, “that I would save you, one of these days, by bringing you to my tower? How strangely things will come about!”

Then he tried, with touching kindness, to do his best for his guests. He brought them coarse but scrupulously clean linen, and urged them both to change their clothes, as the violent rain during their walk, and then the creeping through the bushes, had wetted them through and through. In the meantime he moved the books from the table, and brought bread, butter, cheese, and a bottle of wine; then again, while his guests eat and drank, he prepared a couch for them with greatcoats and blankets, upon which the two adventurers gratefully stretched their weary limbs to rest after the enormous fatigue of the evening. Ruchel had no sooner closed his bold, black eyes, which had been examining the odd outfittings of the tower, down to the minutest details, than he fell fast asleep. Wolfgang saw first, as through a veil, how Balthasar moved, silently and cautiously, all about the room, setting matters to right again; then he saw him sitting by his table, reading in a large volume, and then deep, dreamless sleep fell upon him, like a soft, warm veil.



CHAPTER X.

WHEN Wolfgang awoke the next morning and looked around the room, resting on his elbows, he was for a moment so bewildered by the unusual surroundings, that he took his head in his hands to make sure that it

was not a dream, but stern reality. It was only when he saw his faithful companion Ruchel that his thoughts returned into the old channel. The sergeant was sleeping on the other side of the room as fast as if the hard boards on which he lay had been the best of mattresses, and the weighty folio under his head a pillow of down. Wolfgang recalled now one by one the events of the past day, his interview with Kettenberg, the scene with the colonel, his arrest, imprisonment, and flight, the night's tramp to Rheinfeld, the meeting with his granduncle, Camilla, and her mother, and finally the rescue from imminent deadly danger through the faithful Balthasar. How differently everything appeared to him now in the quiet, sober morning hour! Yesterday the most extraordinary event had seemed quite natural, the most startling adventure a matter of course; to-day he looked with painful amazement at the impassable gulf which had opened between his past life and his present. The decisive step had been taken; it was irrevocable, and he felt that he was on a new path, the end of which was beyond human foresight.

Wolfgang did not waste his time and his thoughts on efforts to penetrate this darkness with prophetic glances. He was content to know that the future, with all its troubles, all its dangers, could never bring back to him the sufferings and the mortifications of his former position; that in fact, whatever might happen, he would at least no longer be a helpless tool in the hands of others, but the maker of his own fate.

This proud consciousness raised him, as upon eagle's wings, above all petty cares for his own weal or woe; but the more perfectly secure he felt where he was, the more he thought with deepest interest of those whom he had left behind, and who would first be affected by the storm roused by his escape from prison. Above all, what would his father say to it?—what might not the unfortunate man have to suffer in consequence of his son's rash act, by which even the last frail ties were broken that had bound him to the rest of the family? Kettenberg had evidently been correctly informed about the whole affair; this was amply proven by the colonel's brutality, the visit of the president's wife and Camilla to Rheinfeld, their conduct last night, and what the old gentleman had said during the memorable scene.

And then—what else could he have done? He had borne what man can bear ; he had submitted, perhaps too patiently, to humiliation. There is a limit even to filial obedience. Happy the man who can aspire to the highest aims of mankind in sweet harmony with relations and companions ; but woe to him who, when the hour strikes which summons him to decide, has no ear for the great word which commands us to let the dead bury the dead.

But, however heroic these thoughts might be, they were not such as could perfectly quiet Wolfgang's gentle, affectionate heart, and again and again his thoughts reverted to his father. If he had known his father happy, or at least safe in his situation, he would perhaps have thought it a merit to separate his own adventurous fate from his ; but he had left a man forsaken by others, he had perhaps increased his misery. This thought burnt itself into his soul, and all his reasoning, all his efforts to convince himself of the contrary, could not make him feel at rest.

And yet he knew that he must not allow any such feeling to affect the courage of which he stood so much in need. His own affairs were surely threatening enough. And then what else could he do? Surely it would be better for his father also that he should secure himself against the evil consequences of his desertion. He could not go back ; there was nothing left him under the circumstances but to go forward.

He rose from his couch and arranged his dress as well as he could. Balthasar, who he thought might be sleeping behind a partition-wall in a corner of the room, was not to be seen ; but the good man had provided for everything before leaving the tower. There was no lack of fresh water, and on the neck of the bottle of wine standing by the platter with bread and butter, hung a note, in the schoolmaster's neatest handwriting, with these words : "I have gone out to reconnoitre, and may not be back till evening. You must not be troubled about me ; I shall be very careful. In the meantime you can examine the tower ; but avoid making a noise ; the troops are still in the neighborhood. Good-by."

Wolfgang had informed Balthasar the night before, during their frugal meal, of the most recent events, and of his own determination, if Munzer's corps should be scattered, to

make his way to the town which was in revolt, or to the revolutionary army in the South. He now recalled that Balthasar had begged him to remain in the Witches' Tower at least until Balthasar should have obtained reliable information as to the results of last night's fight, and about the state of things generally. No doubt the good fellow had gone out, during the night, to carry out his purpose. Wolfgang could not but think with apprehension of his own and Ruchel's fate, if the good schoolmaster should be caught, and they were to be shut up in this tower, from which there seemed to be no escape. But then again he drew comfort from the thought that the remarkable man, who had shown such marvellous ingenuity in concealing himself from the eyes of the world, would no doubt be cautious enough now, when the safety and the life of his guests depended on his watchfulness. At all events, nothing was left now but to await his return.

The noise which Wolfgang had necessarily made in dressing, had aroused Ruchel, who sat up on his hard couch, rubbing his eyes, and looking around the room with amazement, till he suddenly jumped up, exclaiming :

"Good morning, lieutenant !"

Wolfgang drew real comfort from the young man's bright, black eyes, and returned the greeting quite as cordially. The sergeant dispatched his toilet very expeditiously, and then accepted Wolfgang's invitation to keep him company in breakfasting, although he showed by a certain unpretending modesty that he still respected in his fellow-sufferer of to-day, the superior of yesterday. Wolfgang had much to ask of his deliverer, and the latter replied frankly to all his questions.

"I always thought particularly well of you," he said, "from the beginning, and certainly better than of any other officer in the regiment, not excepting even Major Degenfeld, who no doubt meant it very well with us, but still kept us at a distance. Yes indeed, lieutenant, you may believe it or not, they loved you in the company. You could have done anything with us. I have heard the men say, more than once, 'We are all of us ready to die for Lieutenant Hohenstein.' I told Cajus so, and he said, 'Well, that might happen ;' for he knew you were a repub-

lican at heart, and all the republicans thought very highly of you."

Wolfgang asked if Ruchel had long been in relations with Cajus, and the sergeant replied :

"I only made his acquaintance last winter. He sometimes came to the 'Black Bear,' where the men used to drink their beer at night, and told us all about America, where he has been for many years, and about the Indians and the buffaloes, and California. And when we were all listening to him with open eyes and mouths, he told us of the American constitution, and how people over there had everything that we want to have : liberty and equality and a republic, and that every citizen who was born in America could become president, if he was only clever enough. We were mightily pleased with all that, especially I ; for I always wanted to lead a free and easy life ; and became a soldier only because I hoped that would, at all events, lead me a little farther than sawing wood—I was apprentice to a cabinet-maker then, lieutenant—but Cajus always said that as long as the army was as it now is, nothing could come of it. Well, lieutenant, that must be so, for it is a miserable, wretched life, the life of a private or of a sergeant, and especially for a man who has some little sense in his head, and sees how little the officers know themselves. All that filled my head with strange thoughts, you see, and Cajus soon had me where he wanted."

Ruchel told further how Cajus had gradually initiated him into the secrets of the party, and how he, Ruchel, had brought to him other friends, till at last the whole battalion had been in connection with Cajus, a dozen or so non-commissioned officers alone excepted. In all these transactions Wolfgang's name had been adroitly used, for Cajus had always asserted that he was not acting for himself, but in the interest of Lieutenant Hohenstein, who had promised Major Degenfeld and the other gentlemen of the Republican Club, upon his word of honor, that before spring the whole of the second battalion of the ninety-ninth regiment should belong to the republican party.

Wolfgang was greatly surprised when he thus found how important a part he had unconsciously played in the republican conspiracy in Cologne. He did not doubt for a mo-

ment that Cajus had made such improper use of his name without the slightest authority from Munzer or Degenfeld, and simply upon the principle of most fanatics, that the end sanctions the means. He saw now that his situation had been for some time fraught with danger, and that Colonel Hohenstein was justified in placing him under arrest, which he would never have dared if he had not had evidence enough against him to convince a court-martial of his crime. It was clear that he had escaped from long, weary imprisonment, when he thought he was merely following a blind instinct, and this conviction consoled him somewhat with regard to his father.

It was but natural that the two companions, in the course of the morning, came to speak repeatedly of the circumstances of their bold flight, and Wolfgang could not cease wondering how strangely accident and purpose had intermingled. Thus it appeared that Ruchel had firmly believed Wolfgang's arrest was a voluntary act, devised for the purpose of enabling him to place the fort in the hands of the republicans. He had meant this and nothing else by his ironical remark that "Wolfgang would not be in prison long." Then, however, he had overheard the remarks made by the officers in the guard-room, which had made him think he must be wrong in his supposition; and he had, therefore, preferred sending Wolfgang's servant with a message to Cajus, asking him to aid in their escape.

After Ruchel had thus satisfied Wolfgang's curiosity, he thought himself fairly entitled to ask a few questions about the "odd fellow" in whose house they found themselves captives for the moment. Wolfgang told him all that was expedient he should know, and Ruchel was satisfied. He did not seem to be in the least surprised at learning that their host was the very schoolmaster whom everybody had considered dead for two months. The more extraordinary and strange a thing was, the better it suited the man's fantastic head. The odd furniture of the room, the large books in parchment bindings, the minerals, dried plants, boxes and phials filled with things utterly unknown to him—all this caused him great pleasure, to which he gave vent in such curious and humorous remarks, that Wolfgang more than once burst out laughing. Then the restless fellow could not

endure being cooped up in the small room any longer, and he asked Wolfgang's permission to explore the subterranean passages. The latter felt the less disposed to refuse his request, as he was himself quite curious to know the mysteries of the Witches' Tower. They lighted the lantern, which was hanging from a nail on the wall, and descended through the trap-door to the lower rooms. They found that the whole hill on which the tower stood was pierced in all directions. In the lowest story they discovered the narrow passage through which they had come the day before ; but they did not venture far in it, as the oppressive closeness of the air and the unevenness of the floor made their progress very difficult. Besides, there were other passages leading sideways, and they were afraid of losing their way.

They had just reached their room in the tower again, when they were startled by the beating of drums close by. Their first suspicion that their hiding-place had been discovered, fortunately proved incorrect. They could distinctly hear the soldiers conversing on the events of last night. They were probably standing quite near the tower, on the public road. Wolfgang's name was mentioned repeatedly, also Ruchel's ; there was no doubt both of them had been recognized during their struggle with the patrol. They heard how one of the men boasted that he had just aimed at the lieutenant, and would have certainly killed him, if at the very moment of giving fire his neighbor had not knocked against his elbow. Another said he had been so near to the two that he could have touched them with his bayonet ; but he had stumbled over a stone in the way, and when he had recovered himself the runaways had escaped. Where did they go to ? If the devil did not know, he surely could not know what had become of them. A hoarse voice, which they recognized as belonging to the sergeant-major of the first battalion, reprimanded the man for speaking of the devil, who might accept the invitation and appear, sure enough. The runaways, he asserted, had probably gone through the village down to the river, had found a boat there, like the others who had escaped, and had floated down the stream. He, the sergeant, had suggested to watch the bank of the river, but then he was only an old soldier, who had made a few campaigns, and the young ones had it all their own way now !

Ruchel was highly amused. He said it was too funny, in all conscience, to be sitting here in a safe hiding-place, only a few feet from his pursuers ! What faces they would make if he were to call to them, through a small opening in the wall, that he was the devil whom the soldiers had invited, and that he was ready to carry off the whole company ! Wolfgang had to exert all his influence over him to keep him from indulging in his mad prank, and only succeeded when he told him that any such folly would inevitably lead to discovery, or at least to the establishment of a "corps of observation" on the spot, which might make their position very disagreeable. Balthasar might be prevented from bringing them food and drink, and Ruchel might convince himself, by a look at the cupboard, how long they could subsist upon the few provisions left there, and the schoolmaster's single bottle of wine. This last argument had the desired effect. Ruchel confessed that he could live on everything except on air.

With such conversations the time passed more quickly than Wolfgang could have imagined, anxious as he was to see the schoolmaster again. Ruchel was inexhaustible in stories of garrison life ; he also gave Wolfgang, at the request of the latter, a sketch of his life, the strangest mixture imaginable of recklessness and good-nature.

It grew dark in the tower long before sunset, and before long it was perfect night there. A violent wind was howling around the old ruin, and whistled through the high, narrow openings which served as windows. A heavy rain began to fall ; at least the prisoners heard the running of water, which sought an outlet through crevices in the walls. The soldiers could no longer be heard ; nevertheless they dared not strike a light, as Wolfgang did not know how far it might be seen outside.

Ruchel had prepared a couch for Wolfgang as soon as it began to be dark. He thought there was no knowing when the old man would come back, and the lieutenant was not accustomed to camp on the bare floor. He himself took an old cloak of the schoolmaster's, put the folio again under his head, and lay down ; in a few minutes he was fast asleep, but he had made Wolfgang promise to wake him two hours hence, when he would take the watch, and let the lieu-

tenant rest. Wolfgang sat there in the dark, resting on his elbow, and listening through rain and storm to hear what might happen. The rats began to gnaw at the worm-eaten planks at his feet ; several times he thought he heard a call and a whistle, but he convinced himself that it was only owls and other birds that began to fly around the old tower. The very terror of such a watch filled his soul with a pleasant sensation. He thought of the dangers of his position, but only in the joyous consciousness of being fully equal in courage and strength to any peril that might threaten. He had experienced yesterday how far fortune favors the brave. What would have become of him if he had hesitated for a moment to risk his flight ? He would be a prisoner yet, without hope of delivery ; he would have been a prisoner for years, while without, in the great world, the fate of mankind for ages to come was decided on bloody battle-fields ! Now he might hope to take his part in that conflict, as his heart commanded ; and whether he fell or whether he conquered, it was sure to happen only on the side of justice and right. And why should they not triumph ?

It is true the young man could not blind himself to the fact that not all who fought under the sacred banner of liberty came with pure hearts and clean hands. Fanatical enthusiasts like Cajus ; reckless adventurers like Ruchel ; vulgar rabble, such as he had encountered during that sad night at Castle Rheinfeld—were they the kind of stones of which the temple of the future could be built ? But the spiritual idea must everywhere make use of earth-born material in order to embody itself. He had found this out during his long, sleepless nights ; he did not mean to be cheated out of this conviction by anything that might happen.

A rapture of enthusiasm shook his soul to its centre. It seized him as with supernatural power, so that he rose from his couch and vowed with uplifted arm to remain faithful to the good cause through suffering, danger, and death ! And as he swore this with silent, trembling lips, he saw before him Ottilia's cherished image bending towards him with a gentle, affectionate smile.

He had not dreamt altogether ; it was a ray of moonlight which fell through one of the openings upon the wall opposite. He could not help smiling as he made the discovery. "I

have seen you," he said to himself, "and need we wonder when the eye of the body fancies it sees what fills the whole soul."

He stretched himself again on his couch and listened once more to the strange voices of night. The storm and the rain, which had abated somewhat for half an hour, began to rage with renewed violence. Wolfgang heard it with delight, for the bad weather was favorable to Balthasar, whose long absence began to make him uneasy.

Suddenly he thought he heard a noise beneath him as if somebody was coming up the steep steps in the thickness of the wall. He started on his feet; at the same time a feeble light was seen through the crevices of the trap-door; the door was opened from below, and Balthasar, with a small lantern in his hand, appeared at the opening. Wolfgang welcomed the faithful friend with real joy. Balthasar put the lantern on the table, seized both of Wolfgang's hands in his own, and said: "Here I am once more, dear young master. I suppose time has hung heavily on your hands; but I had to make use of the dark evening, and the distance from town is great."

"You have not been all the way to town?" asked Wolfgang, quite surprised.

"Certainly," replied Balthasar, taking off a satchel he had worn across his shoulder and laying it on the table. "I thought as you had to run away so suddenly, you would like your friends to know that you are safe, and so I slipped into town as soon as the gates were opened, and went to see my friend Moss."

"Do you know old Moss?"

"I have known him now for twenty-five years; ever since he was coachman to his excellency."

"Tell me, tell me!" said Wolfgang; "have you heard from my father?—have you seen him?"

Balthasar had turned towards the table, so that Wolfgang could not see his face as he said:

"I have not spoken to him; but as far as I know, all is well. Moss has been all about town and heard much. I will tell you, if you will first permit me to change my clothes, for I am drenched."

Balthasar went behind his partition, and soon reappeared,

sat down by Wolfgang, and said in a whisper : " While your companion is sleeping, let us consider what is to be done. In the first place, here are the contents of the satchel ; they come from your relatives in River street.

" Yes, yes," he said, " I was there too, for I knew through old Moss that they treat you like a child in that house. At first Mr. Schmitz wanted to come himself to bid you good-bye ; but I showed him that that could not well be done ; then he sent you his love and this letter, and a small sum of money. I was to give you the money only on the road, but I suppose you are too sensible to refuse what a friend offers you in the hour of need."

Wolfgang blushed. He remembered the poet's words, " You know how good people ought to think," but he said nothing, and opened the letter, which contained only these few words : " Dear Wolfgang !—You are carried away by the whirlpool. I saw it coming. But you are one of those men who must go their own way, and who may be safely left to find the right way by themselves. Be brave, and breast the waves ! You know how I feel for you. In this solemn hour I may tell you that I love the son of my Margaret as a father loves his own son, whom he would scold if he were not very proud of him.—Peter Schmitz."

Wolfgang's eyes were moist as he folded up the letter slowly, and put it away in his breast-pocket.

" And here," said Balthasar, " is a ring. She who gave it to me said you would know from whom it came. And here," he continued quickly, as if he wished to give Wolfgang time to put away the little jewel without being observed, " are some more things, linen and whatever a traveller may want. That good lady they call Aunt Bella packed them up amid a thousand tears and kindest wishes for your welfare. As for the rest there is not much that is hopeful to report. The expedition is, of course, a complete failure ; the whole corps is scattered ; many have been brought in as prisoners ; many are killed or wounded ; only a few have escaped, probably because they had the courage to fight their way through. Among the latter are Doctor Munzer and Major Degenfeld ; at least nothing has been heard of them. The rebellious town has surrendered to the troops ; the rising in that province is completely quelled. There will be nothing

left for us but to carry out your plan, to join the revolutionary army in the South, if we can get there."

"To us?" asked Wolfgang, placing his hand on the schoolmaster's shoulder; "you do not mean to venture into this desperate war—you who abhor the bloody profession from the bottom of your heart?"

"I mean to go with you," replied Balthasar, raising his gentle blue eyes affectionately to Wolfgang, "if you do not object to it, and if you can make use of a man to whom day and night are all one, and who does not mind wind or weather. Although I cannot and will not fight, there are always many things to be done in a war which the combatants cannot do themselves, and that shall be my share of the work. And then there is something else that drives me out of my asylum."

Balthasar bent his head quite low down to Wolfgang and whispered:

"The terrible woman who drove me to seek refuge in this hole in the wall, has been set free to-day, and she is sure to come to the village. I cannot bear the idea of knowing her so near to me. I must go; pray take me with you."

"Most willingly!" said Wolfgang, taking the proffered hand. "We will stand by each other as faithful companions, for better or worse, in danger and in death!"

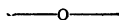
"Then you must not forget me, lieutenant," said Ruchel, who had risen in the meantime and heard the last words, which Wolfgang had spoken in a somewhat louder tone.

"Certainly not!" replied Wolfgang, offering the good fellow his other hand.

"But we must leave immediately," said Balthasar; "the moon has set; at sunrise we must be far from here."

"I am ready!" said Wolfgang.

"All right!" said Ruchel.



CHAPTER XI.

IT was a marvellously beautiful summer morning, when the three adventurers, after a long and troublesome journey, reached at last the summit of the mountains. At their feet a broad stream was winding through a gradually

widening valley, its course being marked out, even where its waters were not seen, by villages almost completely buried in the foliage of trees and shrubs.

"Let us build huts here!" cried Ruchel, stretching himself at full length in the shadow of some trees.

Wolfgang stepped farther out to a place which afforded a look over the whole landscape, and, leaning on his staff, he examined the country carefully. Balthasar had, in the meantime, spread out some provisions from his knapsack on a napkin, and filled his travelling-flask from a spring near by, which hurried, purling and babbling, down into the valley. He now took his place by Wolfgang's side.

"That must be Eberburg," said Wolfgang, pointing at the ruins of a castle which crowned a gently-swelling hill on the opposite side of the valley. "Don't you think so?"

"According to the sportsman's description it can hardly be anything else," replied Balthasar.

"And how far do you think it is from here?"

"At least three hours, and then we may be delayed in crossing the river."

"I only wish we were there," said Wolfgang. "I should not wonder if the regulars had their outposts as far up the river as this neighborhood. If Eberburg has really been occupied for a whole week by the volunteers of our army, we must be prepared to have an encounter with our friends."

"Would it not be better, then, to wait till night before we attempt crossing the river? From here we can at any moment fall back into the woods; but if we are once down in the valley, we must keep on, whether we choose or not."

"It seems to me, dear Balthasar, we are in that predicament already," replied Wolfgang. "According to what we have heard of the movements of the regulars, our men cannot hold so advanced a post another day. If we wait another night we may find the old castle occupied by the enemy instead of our friends. It would be best to march on at once, but we must have some rest. I have observed Ruchel, he could hardly drag himself along the last few miles, although he would not confess it; and I think we also will find a few hours' rest quite acceptable after a five hours' march."

"Well, what have you gentlemen decided to do?" asked Ruchel, when the two returned to their resting-place.

"We will make a short halt here!"

"The longer the better," cried Ruchel, stretching himself in the grass. "I am dog tired, and now I suppose I can say so."

"Poor fellow," said Wolfgang; "it was a little too much, I dare say! Stay where you are; I'll bring you your bread."

"That would be nice!" cried Ruchel, quickly starting up; "when breakfast comes I am always as bright as a lark."

In spite of this boast the man was too fatigued to enjoy his frugal meal; he could only swallow a few mouthfuls, and these also only by the aid of a small allowance of brandy from his little flask, then he crept back to his place and was soon fast asleep once more.

"Would you not better lie down too, my dear sir?" asked Balthasar. "The day is going to be hot. You know I need very little sleep."

Wolfgang assured him he was not tired at all, but he had not been sitting quiet a few minutes listening to the chirping of the insects in the sunburnt grass, and watching the hot air as it rose from the ground, when his eyes closed and his head fell back against the trunk of the tree on which he had been leaning. Balthasar bent a few drooping branches so that they cast a denser shade over his face; then he sat down quietly again, looking alternately at the two slumberers and at the valleys which lay in the dazzling sunshine at his feet. An hour might have passed, when Balthasar rose and gently touched Wolfgang's shoulder; the latter started up in an instant. Ruchel also had been roused by the noise, and rubbed his eyes.

"How are you, Ruchel?" asked Wolfgang.

"Fresh as a fish," replied Ruchel. "Ah! I slept like a top; I dreamt of my lady-love; that is a good omen!"

"Then let us profit by the good omen," said Wolfgang, smiling. "Up, Ruchel! In three hours we shall be at Eberburg!"

"And what are we to do if the river is watched?" asked Balthasar.

"Slip through somewhere!" said Ruchel, swinging his knapsack on his shoulder; "we understand that—don't we, lieutenant?"

"We'll see," replied Wolfgang. "I hope we shall get across safely."

The three travellers followed a footpath which led from the height on which they had rested, down into the valley. At their feet lay a little village, so completely hid under tall trees that little else was to be seen but the high roofs of some of the houses. If the village was not held by the army, and if they could cross the river here, all was safe. Cautiously advancing, they soon reached the first cottages. Till now they had seen nothing that was suspicious; but still it did not seem advisable to enter the village without reconnoitring first. Ruchel, whose skill in such matters had been shown on several occasions, crept along the hedges, while the others remained behind in a safe hiding-place. Ten minutes later, Ruchel came back, half amused and half frightened.

"It was well for us," he whispered, "we did not run right into the trap. There is a sergeant and ten men in the village. On the river is a sentinel; the peasant whom I asked said that no one was allowed to cross in either direction. I told him I was a poor travelling mechanic and must get across. Then he said I ought to go to the next village, that was not occupied, and there is a ferry there. The river cannot be forded; there are deep holes on this side and on the other, in which man and horse may be drowned."

"You can both of you swim," said Balthasar. "Leave me here!"

"No such thing!" replied Wolfgang; "let us go to the next village!"

They crept through the bushes, between the vineyards, going around the village in a wide circuit. It was a painful journey. The sun burnt with almost intolerable intensity on the black slate, of which the mountains principally consisted. Besides, they had to walk almost all the time, stooping low, so as not to be seen from the highroad, on which they noticed people walking in both directions. Unfortunately they lost themselves in a deep glen, from which they could not find their way out for some time. On the other hand,

they were pleasantly surprised to discover, upon reaching the highroad, that they were once more quite near the end of their journey, which they had thought still far off. It was high time. The bad road and the great heat had exhausted their strength. Their lips were parched, and thus they could not resist the temptation, when they reached the little inn on the river-side, all overgrown with grape-vines, to stop for a moment and to refresh themselves with a glass of wine.

A tall, black-eyed girl waited on them promptly and cheerfully. Ruchel noticed that the pretty girl looked stealthily again and again at Wolfgang, and could not keep from making some remark about it. The girl answered sharply, and Wolfgang reminded him of his indiscretion: "Drink your wine, Ruchel, and do not detain us. Time is precious."

He had no sooner uttered these words, than the regular step which only a soldier's heavy boot can produce, was heard on the pavement before the little window half hid under the leaves. Immediately the door was opened violently, and a sergeant entered the room, rifle in hand. As he left the door open, several other soldiers were seen outside. The sergeant walked up to the adventurers, who had risen from their places in great consternation. A glance at the man's sunburnt face convinced them that they had not men of their own regiment to encounter.

The sergeant asked them roughly for their passports. The adventurers had prepared for such an emergency a little story, which Ruchel recited with great glibness of tongue. He and Wolfgang were cabinet-makers, Balthasar a tailor; a band of rebels had robbed them in the morning of their knapsacks, leaving the tailor only his shabby travelling bag. They begged the sergeant not to complete their misfortunes, after they had already lost all their little property.

The sergeant wanted to know why they had so anxiously inquired after the position of the regular troops and the rebels in the last village through which they had come? He considered that very suspicious; and why had they not, like other honest people, followed the highroad? What could they say? Ruchel had an answer for this also:

"Great heavens, Mr. Sergeant," he cried with lachrymose voice, "are you going to ruin us only because we have become afraid of men? These rascally rebels rob us; the

soldiers won't let us pass ; where in the world are we poor devils to find courage to walk about in broad daylight ? But I don't mind it ; you can do with us what you choose ; you can shoot us if you like ; I am tired of this miserable life."

Ruchel sat down again on his bench, supporting his head in his hands as if in perfect despair. He had played his part so well, that the sergeant, who did not seem to be the brightest man in the world, seemed no longer to doubt the truth of his statement. Unfortunately his instructions were of such a nature that he could not let people pass who had no passports ; he must send down to the next village below, and report the matter to the officer in command. He could decide whether they might continue their way ; till then they must consider themselves under arrest.

He went out, locking the only door which the room had.

"Here we are, caught in the trap," said Ruchel, looking at his fellow-sufferers with an air which belonged half to the miserable cabinet-maker and half to the Merry-Andrew ; "what next ?"

"At all events we must not wait for the officer," said Wolfgang ; "if we only knew how many there are."

"One is watching at the window, that is certain," said Ruchel.

At that moment a low knock was heard at a little wooden shutter, which, as they now noticed, covered an opening in the partition-wall. Ruchel ran to it ; the shutter was pushed aside, and through the opening appeared the face of the pretty girl.

"Sweet child," said gallant Ruchel, "help us out, and I'll marry you on the spot."

"I don't want you," replied the girl, snappishly.

"But my comrade ?" asked Ruchel.

"He is no comrade of yours," replied the girl, very decidedly.

"What eyes these girls have !" cried Ruchel, turning with a laughing face to Wolfgang.

"Would you help us out of this trouble, dear child ?" asked Wolfgang.

"I should like to do it !" replied the girl, promptly.

Her black eyes flashed as she said so, and a deep blush rose upon her brown cheeks.

"How many soldiers are there?"

"Three; two are in the room opposite; I have given them of our best; father is in there, drinking with them; he sent me!"

"And without that, you would not have come?"

"Yes!" said the girl, eagerly raising her dark eyelashes again, after letting them droop for a moment on her glowing cheeks; "brother is going to carry you over; he is gone for the boat."

"Where do they keep their guns?"

"They are in the passage, near the door; the door is not very strong; if you give it a violent push, it will force the lock. I would unlock it, but they have left the door on the other side open, and I dare not."

"And you ought not to do it, if you could. You must not run any risk."

"Have a care; the sentinel is coming to the window!" said Ruchel.

"Many thanks, my dear girl," said Wolfgang.

The girl closed the shutters, Wolfgang stepped quickly back.

The sentinel came to the closed window, looked in the room, and continued his walk up and down as he saw the three prisoners all safe. Ruchel was wiping the tears from his eyes with his red handkerchief.

Wolfgang told his companions his plan. At the moment when the sentinel was farthest from the window, they were to force the door, and rushing out, to seize the rifles. The rest would follow as a matter of course.

Balthasar was posted at the window. Wolfgang and Ruchel seized one of the long benches to use it as a ram.

"The girl has gone out to him, and gives him some wine to drink—he is drinking," reported Balthasar.

"Capital girl!" said Ruchel.

"One, two, three!" commanded Wolfgang.

The powerful, well-aimed push made the door break down in an instant. Wolfgang and Ruchel nearly fell over it. In a moment they had seized the rifles, which stood close by, as the girl had said. Then they ran out of the house and rushed upon the sentinel, who stood there, the bottle in one hand, the glass in another, and the gun at rest on the ground,

the picture of helpless terror. Ruchel had disarmed him before he awoke from his surprise.

All this had been done so rapidly, that the two soldiers, who had been sitting quietly over their wine in the other room, found themselves surprised before they well knew what had happened. Ruchel had put the third rifle into the hands of Balthasar, who followed Wolfgang closely. The soldiers knew that the rifles were loaded with balls, and did not think of resistance. The cunning landlord pretended to be very much frightened when Wolfgang placed his bayonet on his breast, and ordered him in a terrific voice to carry them instantly across the river in his own boat. Ruchel, understanding at once Wolfgang's plan, cursed and swore like one possessed, and threatened to shoot the girl, who was coquetting with soldiers instead of helping honest men in their flight. He played the enraged man so naturally that the girl became seriously frightened, and implored Wolfgang with folded hands and tearful eyes to save her. Wolfgang took her hands and said: "He shall not hurt you; but you must go with us. The old man may stay here; now forward, march! Good-by, gentlemen!"

"Good-by!" cried Ruchel; "and when your lieutenant comes, you can tell him, Lieutenant Baron Hohenstein and Sergeant Ruchel send him their kindest regards!"

Wolfgang thought it was high time to make an end to the scene. The noise had attracted the village people, who as yet kept at a distance, but no one could tell whose part they might take in the end. Fortunately the distance from the inn to the ferry was inconsiderable. A boy of sixteen, whose bright black eyes bespoke him a brother of the pretty girl, stood near the ill-built boat, showing his white teeth as Ruchel threatened him with the butt-end of his rifle, and promised to murder him instantly if he did not at once carry them to the other side.

Ruchel and Balthasar had entered the boat. Wolfgang took the pretty girl by the hand, saying,

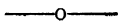
"Good-by! I wish I could thank you as you deserve it!"

The girl looked around shyly; no one had followed them.

"God bless you!" she said, seizing Wolfgang's hands with her own, and raising her eyes and her lips to him. Wolf-

gang pressed a kiss upon the fresh lips. Then he leaped into the boat. The boy pushed off, and told them as he rowed across that the whole village was "republican," that two of them were over yonder with the volunteers, would the gentlemen take him with them? Ruchel was quite ready to do so, but Wolfgang would not hear of it. "Wait a while," he said; "now you would better go quietly home again; and look here! don't let them find out that you took us over of your own accord!"

He put a gold piece in the boy's hand when they touched land, and had left the boat before the boy could recover from his surprise at the generous reward. The others followed. From the place where they had landed, a footpath wound upwards through meadows and grain-fields. That was the shortest road to Eberburg, the boy had said. At the distance of about two miles they saw the venerable ruins on the high hill. There was no impediment now between them and the end of their long journey! Wolfgang shook hands with his companions and cried out joyously: "Forward, march!"



CHAPTER XII.

THEY had of course much to tell each other of their last adventure. Ruchel did not tire of repeating how frightened the soldiers were when they suddenly saw themselves in the power of their captives. Between these descriptions came ever and anon a word of praise for the pretty girl, whom he accused of having been so sharp to him, only because he had made such a deep impression upon her. This again led him to expound his peculiar theory of love, which had the undoubted advantage over other theories, of being eminently practical. The campaign upon which they were entering, he looked upon as a pleasure trip. They would drive the regulars before them like sheep; they would enter triumphantly village after village and town after town; at the end of the war he proposed to return to the scene of his last heroic deed, to marry the brown girl, and spend the

rest of his life amid these green hills, which produced such delicious wine, as the jovial landlord of the "Yellow Cluster," in peace and happiness.

Thus the merry fellow laughed and chatted away ; but Wolfgang also felt somewhat elated. In the full consciousness of his youth and vigor, which he had tried in fatigue and danger, having just escaped once more from imminent peril, possessed of arms which he had conquered by courage and cunning, and cheered by the great idea which he hoped now to see realized, he enjoyed his golden freedom in full draughts, seeing in his present enjoyment after all but a drop of that flood of freedom which the impending conflict would secure to the whole expectant nation. From the turrets of that castle, the crumbling ruins of which were even now apparent through the bushes and trees of the hill-side, an inspired eye had, ages ago, looked forward to that future which now at last had come. What then was the privileged foresight of a few, had now become the common thought of a whole nation ; or if not of a whole nation, yet of its greater part ; and is it not a law of nature that the good in the end invariably conquers the bad ? Had not those very castles, the strongholds of tyrants and robbers, been laid low and changed into crumbling ruins ? Did not the same soil on which once silent, trembling serfs with their own hands drew the plough for their haughty masters, now support a nation of bold hearts, who took the gun from the wall as soon as the summons of Liberty was heard, to venture, full of hope and confidence, upon the last decisive battle for their rights ?

He turned to Balthasar and nearly laughed aloud at the sight of the newly-enlisted champion of liberty. It was indeed an odd sight which the good fellow presented at that moment. Ruchel had buckled around his waist one of the conquered swords, the belt of which was far too large for his slender body, and hung so low from the hips that the short sabre trailed on the ground, like a huge battle-sword. His rifle he carried with the butt-end behind over his shoulder ; add to this his worn-out, black-cloth dress-coat—his faithful companion during the last twenty years—and the faded nankeen trousers which, generally scrupulously tidy, now bore the visible traces of many a night spent in the open fields or near charcoal kilns—thus he sauntered along, evidently

too deep in his thoughts to mind anything else in this world.

"How are you, Balthasar?" asked Wolfgang.

Balthasar awoke from his dreams and smiled kindly, as he always did when Wolfgang spoke to him.

"Thank you kindly," he said; "very well; the unaccustomed load hurts me a little."

"You shall soon be relieved. There will be plenty of men glad to take your arms."

"To tell the truth, my dear sir, I shall be very glad of it. I really think I must look odd enough in this lion's skin."

"A few minutes' patience, and I think you will see our own outposts."

Indeed almost immediately they saw half-a-dozen men, two or three of whom were armed with guns, who kept themselves behind a piece of wall which probably had formerly belonged to the outer line of the castle fortifications. As their guns assumed a threatening direction when the wanderers approached within about two hundred yards, Wolfgang called out to them that they were "friends." Although their appearance spoke eloquently in their favor, his assertion found so little credence that the guns were discharged (without doing any harm), whereupon the valiant marksmen sought quickly the shelter behind which they were posted.

Such an unexpected reception of course surprised Wolfgang and his companions not a little; but they had presence of mind enough to see that it would be best not to give the very cautious volunteers time to fire a second time. They ran, therefore, exclaiming once more that they were "friends," as fast as they could up to the ruins, and were lucky enough to arrive there before the others had accomplished the troublesome business of reloading.

"Why on earth do you fire at us, gentlemen? Don't you see that we are friends?" cried Ruchel.

"Oh! how do we know that?" replied one of the young men, who wore a crumpled cock's feather on his dilapidated straw-hat, and probably commanded the post.

"Well, if we were not friends, you would fare pretty badly now," said Ruchel, holding up his Minie rifle.

"I wish one of you to show me at once the way to your captain," said Wolfgang, having noticed that the firing had

evidently caused quite an alarm in the court-yard of the castle, "so that we may avoid any further misunderstanding. As far as I can see, there is nothing else to be done here."

"Yes, indeed!" said another youth, "we have nothing else to do here. Let us all go up there."

The whole company broke up, therefore. The nearer they came to the ruins, the greater seemed to become the noise which Wolfgang had heard from a distance; and as they entered through the unguarded gates into the court-yard, surrounded by picturesque ruins, they beheld there the most extraordinary spectacle.

About half-a-dozen small peasant carts, of which only a few had horses as yet, were almost stormed by some fifty men. As only half of them could find room, or rather had found room, while the other half were still standing on poles and wheels, or balancing on ladders, and as the former were unwilling to abandon their vantage ground, while the latter refused to run alongside on foot, there was a fearful din raised by the excited crowd, and here and there a hand to hand fight had begun. There was, especially, one cart around which the noise seemed to be even greater than elsewhere. It held only one man, whose bloated, red face was disfigured by fear, and whom the tri-colored sash which he wore round his waist, and the red feather on his slouched hat, designated as the commander. The wrath of the others seemed to be specially directed against him.

"There goes the wine-butt!" cried one.

"I should like to be such a captain!" cried another.

"To ride away in a carriage while we have to walk on foot," said a third.

The man with the red feather turned his bleared eyes from one to the other, unable to find a word of justification or reply. In his helpless embarrassment he hailed the arrival of Wolfgang and his companions, who were just coming into the court with their escort. Here was a favorable opportunity to direct the unpleasant attention of the men into another channel, and perhaps to regain the respect he seemed to have lost.

"Bring them here!" he cried, rising in the cart. "Here! who are you? what do you want? How dare you fire at my men?"

"How dare you speak in such a tone to men who come to you as friends?" replied Wolfgang, appreciating at a glance the tragi-comic situation.

"I'll teach you manners!" cried the man with the feather.

"A person who has so evidently lost the respect of his own men, cannot expect that of strangers," said Wolfgang, turning his back to the wretch.

A short stout man in a green hunter's coat, carrying a short rifle under the arm, approached Wolfgang and said:

"That is right! Give it to the miserable creature!"

"But what is going on here?" asked Wolfgang.

"The men have chosen that person, who by-the-by is a travelling agent for a wine house in the neighborhood, as their captain—or rather, he has chosen himself, and is about as fit for it as Nero for dancing on a rope. Now he has made a requisition for carts, under the plea of retreating, according to the orders he says he has received, as fast as possible, but in reality I believe only to reach a place of safety for himself."

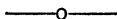
"Then let him run!" said Wolfgang.

"Yes," said the man in green; "if we only had another leader in his place. I have no talent for the business; perhaps you could do it. You would render the good cause a great service; for if this goes on so, there will not be ten men of the whole corps left to-night, and some of them are capital men, who only require to be led properly."

Wolfgang's decision was quickly formed. He asked the gamekeeper—for such was the man in green—to point out to him the most intelligent among the men and to help him in forming with their aid a small, reliable company. The man was willing. They went from cart to cart, and ere long they had restored order. Ruchel had not been inactive in the meantime. He had made acquaintance all around, which meant, with him, he had made friends everywhere; but he had especially pointed out Wolfgang to the people, telling them, as a great secret, that he was a great man, who had taken sides with the people, and who had more military genius than the whole general-staff of the regular army. Not an hour ago, he added, he had taken and killed an outpost of the royal troops.

As Wolfgang's appearance and the conquered arms seemed to corroborate Ruchel's statement, there was no difficulty in passing the huntsman's proposition to choose Wolfgang their leader for the present, which he proclaimed, standing on a slight eminence. Wolfgang then made them a little speech, in which he thanked them for their confidence and begged them to remain steady in their determination, without which he should have to give up the command at once. He then arranged the men in three ranks: in the first those armed with fire-arms, in the second those who had swords or scythes, and in the third those who were without any arms at all. Then he divided the whole troop into three divisions, two of which, under the command of Ruchel and the gamekeeper respectively, were to form the van and rear guard, while he would command the bulk himself. Of the carts he ordered only one to be taken for provisions and ammunition; the others he placed at the disposal of those who preferred going home to fighting against the enemy.

The men, animated by the best will, no sooner found out that they had had a competent commander, than they were completely changed. They cheered Wolfgang, and obeyed his orders most promptly. The whole detachment started; first the gamekeeper, who knew the whole country, with six quick and intelligent young men; then Wolfgang with the main body; finally Ruchel with his men. Balthasar, who had very willingly abandoned his rifle, sword, and cartridge-box to a handsome young fellow recommended by the gamekeeper, kept by Wolfgang's side. The travelling wine agent had escaped unobserved, leaving his tri-colored sash behind him, which was found hidden behind a large block of stone.



CHAPTER XIII.

THUS Wolfgang found himself suddenly in a position which gave him an opportunity of showing his military talent, while it imposed responsibilities of various kinds on his young, unpractised shoulders. The march

to the village, where a larger corps was stationed, and from which the order for the retreat had been issued, lasted longer than he expected, as the men, unaccustomed to marching, were hard to move. When they at last reached the place towards nightfall, they heard that the corps had left during the afternoon, and no one knew whither. Under these circumstances Wolfgang could do nothing better than to stop in the village, the inhabitants of which, although but just relieved of quite a heavy burden, received the new-comers very hospitably. They were still in the first rapture of excitement, and submitted cheerfully to such demands. Wolfgang, nevertheless, was occupied far into the night in finding quarters for all the people, and before he could lay himself down on his bed of straw in a peasant's hut. After a refreshing sleep, he ordered a merry village musician, who had yesterday joined his command, to blow the reveille, and contrary to his expectation the men came up with praiseworthy promptness, and almost in full numbers. There were, in fact, only three wanting; and their loss, the gamekeeper said, was a clear gain to the little corps. Now they marched on in the direction in which it was most probable the main body had retreated, but they had not proceeded more than four or five miles before a messenger met them with a written order that the "Eberburg company" should occupy a village in the mountains to the left, and there observe the enemy till further orders. The order was addressed to "Captain Wohler." Wolfgang wrote on a leaf of his pocket-book that "Captain Wohler" had left his company, and that he had been chosen to take the command, a position which he thought it better to retain till a successor should be appointed. He promised to carry the company to the appointed place. The orderly galloped off. Wolfgang commanded a circle to be formed, told the men what order he had received, and asked them if they still entrusted the command to him. He had the satisfaction to hear his question answered by a unanimous yes and hearty cheers.

Next to his own personal influence, Wolfgang owed the readiness with which the men followed him mainly to the gossip of Ruchel, who did not conceal from the men that Wolfgang had been an officer in the regular army, a fact with which he was all the more familiar as he himself had been a sergeant

in his company. Ruchel managed to convey all this in such a mysterious manner, that the simple-minded rustics soon conceived a most exalted idea of the generalship of their leader, an impression greatly heightened by Wolfgang's occasional orders, sending now a patrol out to cover his flanks, and now taking some other precaution of which the men did not see the immediate bearing, and which appeared to them all the more scientific. Thus Wolfgang could not persuade himself to scold Ruchel for his frivolous way of talking, especially as he had, on the other hand, occasion to admire the young man's practical abilities, his sound common sense, and his promptness whenever measures of real importance were to be executed, and especially his really remarkable talent of teaching the men military lessons almost in play. It did not take him long to make them give up their disorderly manner of walking, and to teach them to march regularly in sections ; then he actually brought them into line, and before the day had ended, they knew some of the elementary military manœuvres tolerably well. These useful manœuvres excited the admiration of the people in all the villages through which they marched, and excited a good deal of ambition among the men themselves. So many volunteers came and offered their services, that Wolfgang could easily have doubled his numbers ; but he only accepted those who were armed, sending the others back to the main body as unsuited for the outpost duty which he was ordered to perform.

When Wolfgang had chosen his position, he had every reason to be satisfied with this precaution. The village was small ; the inhabitants were poor peasants, who had hardly enough for themselves. Fortunately the weather was so fine as to make the question of quarters easy enough. Under Ruchel's direction and with the aid of the gamekeeper, they erected a couple of barracks at a suitable place outside of the village ; and although they consisted only of stones, turf, and branches, the men were far more comfortable there than in the low, damp rooms of the cottages. It was not quite so easy to procure provisions for so many men in this remote mountain region. In vain did Wolfgang repeatedly mention his necessities in the reports which he sent daily to the main body to which his company was attached. He

either received no answer at all, or the words: "We have nothing to spare ourselves; everybody for himself!" Nor did they seem at headquarters to notice the change in the command. The orders were now addressed to "Captain Hohenstein," and that was all. Although this easy way of managing affairs appeared at times very ludicrous to Wolfgang—especially when compared with the red-tape system which characterized the regular army down to the smallest trifles—he felt on the other hand how his own responsibilities were thus increased. The small remnant of his own funds could not possibly suffice long for the wants of so many, even where prices were as low as they were here. As he had the loaves distributed which he had purchased with his last dollar, he asked himself, smiling, what Uncle Peter would have said if he had known how his money was spent? As the next day brought neither money nor provisions, he had to resort to "promises to pay" on the provisional government, if he did not wish to abandon his position or to send the men home. But in order not to bear the sole responsibility of such a measure, he sent the gamekeeper, who offered himself for the errand, with a detailed report to headquarters. The man promised to return with all possible dispatch, and started on his way through the mountains.

Amid these daily increasing cares it was a real comfort to Wolfgang to find himself, in the finest summer weather, in a country in which nature made ample amends for the want of fertility by an abundance of romantic beauty. The mountains sloped from the village downwards in several terraces, spreading far into the wide, fertile plain. On the right and left, as in a vast semicircle, wooded hills extended till they merged in the blue horizon. Behind the village, spruces and pines climbed up the hill, while a foaming mountain brook sought its way into the valley, falling in countless cascades over sharp-edged rocks. Often, when the setting sun still further enhanced the charm of such a landscape, marking the ridge of the mountains in sharp lines against the bright evening sky, and deepening the shades in the low valleys and glens, while in the plain red fiery lights were still sparkling on the waters, and gradually fading away till one uniform gray clothed valley and mountain alike in its mournful garb—Wolfgang would sit above the village, on a projecting

rock, from which he commanded the whole prospect, with Balthasar by his side, the good, faithful friend, whose company was specially pleasant to him on such occasions.

For no one could have a more susceptible eye for the beauties of nature, or a keener ear for all the wonderful tongues in which it speaks to us, than Balthasar. As he himself, in his touching modesty and harmless existence, resembled a plant, which accepts rain and sunshine with like humility, or the birds of the heavens that sow not and reap not and are yet fed by their great Father on high, so there was no flower springing from the ground that he did not know and welcome as a sister ; there was no bird in the air whom his eye did not follow on his swift wing with a kindly smile. And as he loved plants and animals, they seemed to love him in return. Wholesome herbs, which others pass unnoticed, graceful flowers which the amateur looks for eagerly, all were right there by the wayside for him, the near-sighted man, as if they had been waiting for him. Birds which generally avoid the neighborhood of men, came fluttering up to him ; the wildest dogs were silent when he approached, and jumped up at him wagging their tails and licking his hands.

The strange man had not touched a weapon since that first day ; but he had assumed a position which in war often requires more bravery and cold-blooded valor than that of the soldier in array of battle. He had become the surgeon of the company. Many a brave boy, whose sore feet would carry him no farther, owed to the lotions of the "doctor," as they all called him, his ability to rise and walk once more ; many a one, whom excessive fatigue had laid on the sick-bed, was cured in marvellously short time by Balthasar's poultices and decoctions. In return, Balthasar was universally loved and esteemed. Not even the wildest of the men—and there was no lack of such in the company—would venture upon the slightest allusion to the old-fashioned dress-coat, which had been restored to its usual tidiness, or the faded nankeen trousers, which looked odder than ever with their numerous patches.

But Balthasar was not a physician for the body only, but also for the soul. Indecent songs, such as these rough men were wont to sing at night in camp, immediately ceased when

his unsightly figure appeared, and quarrels were allayed by a soft word from his lips, or a single glance from his gentle blue eyes. Once Wolfgang had severely reprimanded a man who had been guilty of a gross neglect of duty, and dismissed him from the company when he proved obstinate and impertinent. He had left, amid curses and imprecations. An hour afterwards the same man came back to Wolfgang, begging his pardon, and humbly imploring him to let him return to the company. When Wolfgang asked what on earth could have produced such a great change of mind, the man said, amid tears, that "the doctor had talked to him, and made him see what a wicked, ungrateful man he had been."

It was not without a feeling akin to reverence that Wolfgang had noticed this quiet, beneficent activity of his friend. The higher, however, his esteem for the excellent man rose with every day, the more painfully he felt the difference in their views on the revolution. Balthasar did not conceal his disappointment at the true nature of the rising for a moment. He did not believe that violence could produce peace. Humanity, he thought, could not be improved by rousing all the worst passions of the human heart; the arch-enemy of man, selfishness, could be overcome only by great love; and to his mind, revolutions were only symptoms, showing the progress of the malady, but by no means indicating a near recovery and increased strength.

Such views reminded Wolfgang very forcibly of similar utterances which he had often heard from Munzer's lips, though in a different connection, and with a different coloring. This led him to speak of his old friend, and now he found, to his great surprise, that Balthasar was quite familiar with Munzer's views. "I fear," he said, among other things, "that your friend does not believe in the very men whom he wishes to improve; that he respects the working classes, for whom he ostensibly fights, just as little as the nobles and landed proprietors; and that if he had succeeded in making the former the rulers in the state, the relations might have been different, but by no means better. What does it mean, to say, labor must rule? A society, such as I imagine, must be ruled by no one class, but by all, under the control of reason. To make the laboring classes rulers, would only be

carrying the disease to another part of the system, but not curing it."

When Wolfgang tried to defend his friend against such reproaches as these, and in his effort to excuse him also mentioned Munzer's domestic relations as a cause of his cheerless views, Balthasar was apt to become more excited than Wolfgang had ever seen him. It pained him inexpressibly in his heart, he said, to see again and again with what ingenuity men warred against their own happiness, and transformed even the sweetest and holiest relations into a source of misfortune and wretchedness.

Wolfgang was sorry to have led the conversation to a subject which must needs be extremely painful to poor Balthasar. He resolved never again to touch that sore point in his friend's heart.

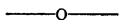
One effect of these conversations was to make the young man more and more anxious to learn what had become of Munzer, and, if possible, to join him once more. He had not doubted that his friends had escaped after the night of horrors at Rheinfeld, else Balthasar would have heard of them during the day he spent in Cologne.

To his great delight, the very next day brought him the fulfilment of his wishes, at least in part. The gamekeeper returned from headquarters with a small escort of armed men, bringing money, and upon a farm-wagon the arms and ammunition which were so sadly needed; finally an order from headquarters, in which the election of "Captain Hohenstein" was officially confirmed, his measures approved, and he himself ordered to fall back immediately upon the main body of the army. He was not to engage in any conflict unless he should see a clear advantage to be gained by fighting.

The order was signed: Degenfeld, major, etc.

There were a few lines added in Degenfeld's own handwriting: "My dear friend, long lost and found again! Come as soon as the important commission entrusted to you will permit you to come. I am anxious to see you. Munzer, who is engaged in one of the bureaux, is absent on business. I expect him back in a few days; perhaps you will be here before him. I hope we shall soon meet as happy as men can be in this sublunar world!"

Half an hour later, "Captain Hohenstein" and his company had left the village. The vanguard of the regulars, which entered it half an hour afterwards, under command of Colonel Hohenstein, found the ashes still hot on the fire-places. The colonel determined to punish these "dogs of republicans" for their impudence, and detached a battalion in pursuit. In the evening, active firing was heard higher up in the mountains. Only towards nightfall the battalion returned in a condition which confirmed the words of the commanding officer: "that the rebels had been admirably led and had been fighting like devils."



CHAPTER XIV.

WHEN Wolfgang, on the third day, reached headquarters, Degenfeld received him with open arms and tears in his eyes.

"Pardon me this unmanly weakness," he said, "but I have mourned you as dead, and I cannot tell you how rejoiced I am to press you once more in my arms. When I thought I had lost you, I felt how dear you had become to me. I am proud of you, dear Wolfgang. You have shown great military ability under very trying circumstances. Your successful fight against a force six times as strong as your own, is a superb deed of arms, and your retreat through the mountains quite a masterpiece."

Wolfgang felt reluctant to accept such praise, but Degenfeld came back to it repeatedly in the course of the confidential conversation in which the two friends communicated to each other what had befallen them since the night at Rheinfeld. Degenfeld and Munzer had, with Cajus and a few others, fought their way down to the river, had crossed it in a boat, and walked all that night along the opposite shore; on the next morning early, they had gone on board a steamer, the captain of which was known to Munzer as belonging to their party, and thus they had found themselves, a few hours later, beyond the reach of danger. They had

then continued their journey without detection through the revolutionized province to the seat of the provisional government, which received them joyfully. Degenfeld had thought it best to remain in the position which he had assumed on the day of his arrival, although higher places, and even that of commander-in-chief, had been offered to him. "You know, dear Wolfgang," he said, "that I do not believe I have any talent for command ; as an officer on the general's staff I thought I could serve the good cause, but I must confess that I have lost that hope also."

He then gave Wolfgang a description of the provisional government and of the state of the revolutionary army, which Wolfgang's own experiences convinced him was by no means exaggerated. "There is want of everything," said Degenfeld, "except marvellous self-conceit and incredible recklessness, which would be ludicrous in the extreme if the circumstances were different. You know how little I think of our army organization at home ; but with all its pedantry and red tape, it is at least a compact mass, imposing by its mere weight. But here all is chaos. We have neither arms nor ammunition, and no means are taken to procure any. Everybody does what he chooses, and in nine cases out of ten he chooses badly. We live as if we were lying in Abraham's bosom, and in twenty-four hours the enemy will be at our gates ; they ought in fact to be here now, if their timidity was not even greater than their slowness. I try in vain to advise these people what they ought to do in order to prevent our whole army from being captured in these mountains like mice in a trap. They do not listen to me : 'Kossuth did so and so ; we must do as Kossuth did.' With this mysterious Shibboleth they meet all my arguments. I repeat it, I have given up all hopes of a successful campaign."

"And Munzer ?"

"Munzer calls for a war of destruction by the workingmen and the poor in town and country against the ruling classes. That has been his aim for some time. His share in our movement is evidently not in harmony with his principles. He is perfectly conscious of it, and quite angry at himself now for having joined us in this war. He also has made attempts to bring organization into the chaos that pre-

vails here, but as unsuccessfully as I did. Since that time he has become quite bitter and misanthropic, so that he avoids all meetings with me, even in spite of our intimacy in Cologne, where I was at last the only friend with whom he conversed. He has no intercourse now with any one except Cajus, his evil genius, as I have often called the mysterious man."

"But did you not formerly think very well of that man?"

"I cannot deny that," replied Degenfeld. "He is beyond doubt a very superior man, whose valor, presence of mind, and iron will, everybody must admire who comes in close contact with him and can appreciate these qualities. The man must have suffered extreme losses or sorrows to have become what he is; that is why I do not judge him, although I never feel comfortable in his presence. I consider him capable of doing anything and everything for the purpose of carrying out his ideas. There is no heart in the man; for with the only passion which fills his whole being, his fierce, inexorable hatred of aristocrats, the heart has nothing to do. And who is not an aristocrat in his eyes? I am one, you are one, and I really think he does not even look upon Munzer as an exception. And what is the most curious part, is this: I believe Munzer dislikes the man quite as much as I do. For I have found out that Munzer is in truth a thoroughly aristocratic nature. He is quite as much so in his thoughts as in his taste. Whatever is vulgar or ordinary, is painful to him, intolerable, and contemptible. His soul delights in the beautiful, the great. I always feel as if he had been born to live in a higher sphere than our ordinary every-day life, in which he might have been as happy as he is unhappy now. Hostile fate has called him to life in a hut, and not in a palace; and has given him, with the instinct of a lion, the yoke of an ox to bear. Thus his whole life is a chain of contradictions; he likes me because I am an aristocrat, and admires in Cajus the rigid consistency of a republican commonist. He has married a plain, insignificant girl, to do his duty as a simple citizen; and he worships Antonia because she is in everything the precise contrast to his wife. You see, dear Wolfgang, I criticize my friend sharply, but I would not take such a liberty if he were not my friend, or rather, if I were not his friend."

Wolfgang had been too long a warm friend and an ardent admirer of Munzer—however his opinion might have changed of late—not to make him take up his defence with great feeling. He insisted upon it, that an insignificant woman, who moreover, purposely and from a feeling of false shame, concealed the better part of her own self from her husband's eyes, was more to blame than the husband. Degenfeld would not admit that.

"A woman, such as you describe Clara Munzer," he said, "only conceals her virtues, as the sensitive plant closes its leaves, when light and heat are wanting for natural development. Munzer has no such warmth, no bright sunshine to give; the fiery passions of his soul are incompatible with the genial warmth of the fireside. Talent is required for everything, even for the duties of a father of a family. I would probably have had that talent; Munzer has it not. But now come, captain, you were going to show me your company, then we must wait upon the members of the provisional government; you will see, to your surprise, how easy it is to live—and to govern."

Degenfeld had appointed a rendezvous for that purpose in one of the hotels of the city, where the principal men of the revolution were in the habit of meeting at night. Wolfgang was standing in a circle of men, who were expounding to him that mysterious dogma: Kossuth did so; *ergo*, we do so! when he felt a hand lightly laid on his shoulder. He turned round: it was Degenfeld. The man's fine face bore the expression of sad, mournful solemnity, so that Wolfgang immediately left the circle, and asked him if anything special had happened? Degenfeld took him by the arm and led him in silence out of the room into the large, quiet garden behind the hotel. Wolfgang, whose mind was wholly filled with political and military matters, thought the crisis had come in which Degenfeld's sad prophecies were to be fulfilled. "I am prepared for the worst," he said; "speak out: our retreat is cut off, and nothing is left but to die on the battlefield?"

"That would not terrify either of us, I believe," said Degenfeld, with a peculiar, melancholy sadness in his voice, "for the death we die is more or less at all times in our own hand; but the life of others is written in a book of which

we only now and then catch a glimpse, and the closing chapter of which is, therefore, apt to surprise us. I have received news from Cologne, Wolfgang, from a correspondent who stands in nearer relations to you than to me—from your uncle, Peter Schmitz.”

“Then my father is dead?” said Wolfgang, with trembling lips.

“You have said it, dear Wolfgang!” replied Degenfeld, sadly.

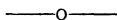
“And I have killed him!—have at least helped to kill him!” cried Wolfgang, hastily withdrawing his arm from Degenfeld’s. “Do not deceive me! My father was perfectly well when I left him—he did not die a natural death! I know it, although you will not tell me so. His circumstances were in a bad condition—he spoke of it calmly—but I ought not to have been deceived by his calmness. I was his last hope—I have robbed him of that hope. I ought to have made this last sacrifice for him—but, Major Degenfeld, could I do so?—could I sacrifice my honor?”

Wolfgang pressed Degenfeld’s hands, and stared anxiously in his face.

“No, you were not at liberty to do so,” replied Major Degenfeld, with a firm voice. “Come, Wolfgang, you are a man. A man has a right to see clearly all that concerns him, be it what it may. Your father died by his own hand; his circumstances were in a bad condition, but even if you had sacrificed your honor—and that was out of question—you could not have saved him. He was beyond all saving power on earth. I knew your father, Wolfgang, when we were both young officers in the same regiment; we were friends; I liked him much, for he was very attractive, as attractive as good looks, graceful manners, and much sprightliness can make a man. But he lacked what makes a real man of a man: loyalty and truthfulness. He never took life in earnest. I was then already afraid he would end badly; for he who looks upon life as a gay, frivolous game, must in the end play false, whether he will or not. Thus your father has at last played false, and has been forced to cover the deficit in the treasury which was entrusted to his care, with his life. Poor, dear friend! I should have liked so much to spare you this grief! But you would have heard

it sooner or later, and I am proud enough to think you are attached to me, and will allow me to help you in bearing what is almost too much for one to bear alone."

Wolfgang threw himself on the bosom of his noble friend. Degenfeld was deeply moved. "See what you can do with me," he said. "I am old enough to be your father, and God knows how proud I should have been to have had such a son! Or take me as your brother; I feel quite young again in you; that I am your friend, you know, I hope, by this time!"



CHAPTER XV.

AT Wolfgang's request, Major Degenfeld had given him his Uncle Peter's letter, which contained the details of the alderman's death, as far as they were known in town. Wolfgang saw that his father could not have been saved, as Degenfeld said. The necessary legal inquiries had shown that he had for years lived only at the expense of his creditors; even considerable sums which he had received from the general for Wolfgang's military education and support, had been swallowed up by his insatiable indebtedness. This last discovery brought deep blushes to Wolfgang's cheeks. While he had used the utmost economy, his father had no doubt presented him to the old general, and probably to the whole family, as a heartless prodigal; for during the whole of his military career he had not spent the tenth part of the sum which his father had received from the general on his son's account.

It was a terrible night, this night in which Wolfgang thus squared accounts with his father, and wiped the cold perspiration from his brow, as he sat by the open window in the warm night-air. Several times he thought he heard a noise at his door; it was Balthasar, who could not sleep from anxiety for his "young master," who had at last learned the mournful secret which he had so long locked up in his faithful bosom. But Wolfgang could not open the door; he felt that he was not able to continue this solemn interview with death and with crime before a witness.

All who knew Wolfgang noticed the great change which from that day took place in his whole being, even externally. The lines in his manly, handsome face became sharper, his kindly mouth closed more firmly, and the glance of his eyes was more severe and searching ; even his carriage became somewhat stiffer, and his step more even. He was filled with the proud instinct of the true man to bear his sorrow in solitude, and in this he went so far that he even took off the ring Ottilia had sent him, and which he had worn so far as a kind of talisman, in order thus symbolically to end his connection with so pure a being. But his inner strength was great enough to enable him to master this hypochondriac tendency in a short time, and, fortunately for him, the time and the position of things were such as to enable him soon to forget his private sorrow in the public misfortune.

What Degenfeld and other experienced men had long foretold, had at last come to pass. The revolutionary army had been compelled to retreat hastily, rolled back as it were by an enemy infinitely superior in numbers, who slowly advanced his columns, as if they were simply obeying the law of gravity, upon the open highways of the defenceless country. A battle in the open field, such as had been boastingly announced a few days ago, was out of question, and few were wise enough to see that the retreat must degenerate into wild flight, if no effort was made at least to check the immense masses of the enemy's troops, which could not be defeated. Up to the last moment Degenfeld had urged this measure in the helpless council of war, and offered to take the command of the rear-guard himself. The only answer was, he might take any command he chose, if he could only find troops to command.

Degenfeld hastened to Wolfgang.

"Can you rely on your company, Wolfgang?"

"I believe I can answer for my men."

"Then hold yourself in readiness ; in an hour we march upon the enemy. How strong are you?"

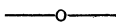
"I have now, all told, four hundred men. I might have twice as many, but I refused all but the most serviceable."

"All the better. I suppose I can muster a couple of hundred more. What we lack in numerical strength, we must

make up in quickness and boldness—two qualities which are fortunately not abundant with our adversaries.”

On this day Munzer and Cajus returned to town from their mission. The city looked like an immense bee-hive, from which the bees are preparing to swarm. Pushing their way through a crowd of horsemen and infantry, baggage carts and ammunition carts, which rolled towards them, cursing, rattling, and thundering, they reached an open square, where Degenfeld and Wolfgang were just inspecting their little corps before setting out. Munzer was furious at the miserable state of things, which far surpassed his worst anticipations. Degenfeld and Wolfgang proposed to him to accompany them, rather than to be carried away, against his will, by the current of general confusion. Munzer was quite ready. “Anything,” he exclaimed, “rather than this misery, which has only legs, but no hands and no heads. My mission was as useless as every step which I have taken here. I’ll go with you. I am fit for nothing, I fear, except to be shot down !”

Cajus smiled with his usual dark smile at this explosion of his impassioned companion. He did not say a word, but silently took a rifle from a half-grown youth who just then ran by them on his flight, shouldered it, and put himself in the ranks. The major drew his sword, and gave the command : “To the right ! Forward ! march !”



CHAPTER XVI.

THOSE were hot months—the months of June and July of the year eighteen hundred and forty-nine. The bright sun in the blue sky shone brilliantly down upon the rustling woods, the waving fields of grain, and the green vineyards of this paradise of a land through which the grim furies of war were raging. In the woods and on the vine-clad hills firing was heard ; the silent glens of the mountains now re-echoed the thunder of heavy guns ; the hoofs of horses destroyed pitilessly the golden grain ; and the

sky-lark rose to the clouds, bearing on her wings the blood that had trickled upon her peaceful nest, in this war between brethren.

Those were hot months—and not the least so for the brave little corps which, under Degenfeld and Wolfgang, had boldly thrown itself in the face of the enemy, contending with him every foot of ground that could possibly be defended by human valor and human ingenuity. They had often barely escaped from imminent destruction ; they had to deplore the loss of many a brave comrade. Always the last on a retreat, always the first in the attack, they had often been for whole days without communication with the army ; and if they occasionally appeared at headquarters, it was only to leave their wounded, to obtain more ammunition, and to return without delay to their post of danger. No one held them ; no one sent them ; they went because they chose to go.

A strange corps ! Little fit for parade, but, to the eye of the soldier, full of promise ; defiant faces, blackened by dust, sun, and perspiration ; powerful frames in ragged blouses and torn boots ; the cartridge-boxes fuller than the knapsacks, of which only a third of the whole number could boast ; their faithful rifle at rest, as it suited the owner, marching in silence, but swift of foot and indefatigable—such they appeared in the misty dews of the mountains early as morning broke ; and often, a few hours later, fierce relentless fighting filled those remote valleys.

Then “Degenfeld’s brigade” soon became well known to the enemy also. They knew the small but terrible corps which always attacked at the most inconvenient time, and at the point where it was least expected, and with equal bravery in the charge or in sudden and mysterious retreat ; they knew that it was under the command of officers who had gone over to the rebels ; and they even knew, thanks to their spies, that Degenfeld and Wolfgang were the highest in command. Since then there was always a special eagerness visible in the ranks of the battalions of the regular army when they were sent out under fire and heard that they were to encounter “Degenfeld’s brigade.” The officers, it was said, had pledged their word to catch the “deserters” dead or alive. Such, at least, was the report of the prisoners they had taken on various occasions. They said that the colonel of the ninety-

ninth regiment of infantry, Baron Hohenstein, was especially furious. He had repeatedly expressed, among his officers, the hope that they would not punish him for the disgrace of having a relative in the republican rabble ; he had also threatened to cut down with his own sword any soldier whom he should find shirking his duty when under fire. The prisoners had, therefore, been quite willing to be taken, and said that many more would act likewise if fear did not keep them.

"They shall not take us alive, Wolfgang," said Degenfeld, putting his hand on his friend's shoulder.

"Even if we should have to fall upon our swords, like Brutus and Cassius," replied Wolfgang, smiling.

"Ah, if we had but to do with a Cæsar," said Degenfeld, sighing, "death would not be so bitter ! You know I would not swear allegiance to Cæsar, but I would leave him the world which has no longer room for a freeman. Yes, looking at the matter carefully, a Cæsar might be a blessing for this beloved, many-headed monster of a country of ours."

"Do not let your friends over there hear that," said Wolfgang, pointing at Munzer and Cajus, who were lying under a tree at some distance, conversing in an undertone.

A man in a blouse, whose tri-colored sash marked him out as an officer, approached the two with a stiff, military salute, his hand on his weather-beaten slouched hat, and said : "Permit me, major ?"

"Will you not sit down with us, lieutenant ?" asked Degenfeld, smiling.

"Thanks, major ! But I have to superintend first the cleaning of the rifles. Have to report that the three prisoners from the ninety-ninth regiment want to enlist. Good men, major, and we have had no recruits to make up for our losses."

"What do you say, Wolfgang ?" asked Degenfeld.

"I think we can rely on our friend Lieutenant Ruchel," replied Wolfgang.

"Then take them in your company, Ruchel. But watch them well ; place them, the first opportunity you have, on an exposed post, and see how they behave ; if they do well, *tant mieux*, all the better !" Degenfeld added, correcting himself, as he noticed that Ruchel cast an inquiring look at Wolfgang.

"Aye, aye, sir!" said Ruchel, raising his hand again to his hat and turning on his heel.

"It is strange," said Degenfeld, when Ruchel had left them, "how the cue will hang down our neck long after it has been cut off. I cannot get accustomed to look upon this man as an officer, although I admire his military ability, and we all like him dearly on account of his excellent qualities. Why? Simply because I have known him so long in the coarse uniform of a sergeant, and because his manner of expressing himself is not the most elegant in the world. And I doubt if he does not feel the same. Although we treat him as an equal, I apprehend he does not look upon himself as such. And if we, who claim to be sensible men, are so foolish, how can we expect more from others? I begin to agree with your friend Balthasar about his 'quiet' revolution. It looks as if we could only kill one another without improving or converting each other."

"That would be Cajus's theory," said Wolfgang, "for I think he says that a generation which cannot be improved or converted ought to be destroyed!"

"And that will come to pass," said Degenfeld. "The old generation will perish in the desert of the revolution, in order that the new generation may obtain possession of the promised land. You, dear Wolfgang, belong already to the new generation; you are a modern man. With us old people, nothing can be done any more. We must be cut down and thrown into the fiery oven of the world's history."

Major Degenfeld said this in a semi-humorous tone, through which, however, his melancholy, his solemn, disheartening conviction became clearly visible. It was not the first time he had spoken thus. Wolfgang had seen this sad feature in his friend's character come out more and more prominently, and he understood now only too clearly why Degenfeld had always denied himself the capacity of playing a prominent part in a great revolution. He was a republican in spirit, but not in his heart—in his imagination, but not in his blood and his innermost soul. His inclinations were all peaceful; his only passion was study. Bitter, bloody conflict was altogether foreign to his nature. But all the greater was Wolfgang's admiration for the excellent man. He alone knew what this fair, harmonious soul

had to suffer amid all these discords ; he alone knew what an effort this man had to make in order to bear calmly the bloody consequences of his theories.

There was actually some affinity of thought between Degenfeld and Balthasar, and this was no doubt the motive which led them to be much in each other's company. For hours Degenfeld would chat in camp or on the march with his "modern Socrates," as he called him in jest. He praised the rich store of knowledge which Balthasar had acquired in his solitary studies, and quite as much his child-like purity of heart and infinite kindness. "That man makes us all blush," he said often to Wolfgang ; "he is at all times what we wish to be in our best hours. I should envy him his peace of mind, if I were not afraid thus to forfeit the last claim I may have on Cajus's respect."

Cajus made indeed no concealment of his contempt for Balthasar, although, of course, he did not speak of it openly to Degenfeld and Wolfgang. But he was all the more open to Munzer. He called Balthasar "an emotional enthusiast, the very companion for such dreamers as Wolfgang and Degenfeld." He said it was nonsense to bring such a man in the field, at the sight of whom men forgot already what courage was.

Poor Munzer had of late become more gloomy and morose than ever ; he lived in almost perfect solitude. Only with Cajus he seemed to feel well ; and that cold reserved man, for his part, seemed likewise to feel in Munzer alone a genuine, warm interest. Munzer had refused to serve in any other capacity than a private soldier in the little corps, which was sadly in want of capable officers. Cajus had at least consented to command a small detachment, for which post he was eminently qualified by great military talent. In their deliberations, also, Munzer rarely took part ; only now and then he would in a few words give his views, always preferring those of the opposition and always supporting Cajus.

Even his outward appearance had changed in a most painful manner. His noble head, which he formerly bore proudly aloft, bent forward ; his eyes, once so bright and eloquent, steadily fixed on the ground, he would march by the hour in perfect silence, not uttering a sound, and showing in his movements that even the physical strength of his body was

broken. Only when he was under fire, the burden that oppressed his soul seemed to be lighter. When the rifles cracked and the minie balls were whistling around their heads or came crashing through the branches, he breathed freely ; then his cheeks colored up and his eyes flashed ; he talked and even joked with those who stood near him, the merrier the greater the danger was. He exposed himself even so constantly to most imminent danger, that the superstitious minds in the corps hardly doubted but that the doctor was invulnerable, while Wolfgang became sadly convinced that Munzer was seeking death.

He told him so one evening, when they had retreated to a comparatively sheltered position after a hot skirmish with the enemy's outposts. Munzer assented very calmly, "I have lived long enough," he said, "to know that men such as I am do not suit this world. Life may be invaluable to happy men ; but it is impudence or absurdity, or both at once, to impose it upon those who are unhappy. Life has only a relative value, which each one must determine for himself ; for nobody is in his neighbor's skin, or feels with his neighbor's heart, or thinks with his brain. Now, when the value of life has fallen below zero, it is no longer a virtue, but a disgrace to live. The ancients thought in this respect, as in many others, more wisely than we do with our pretentious transcendental morality.

"I think I may speak about that as freely as about the work in which we are engaged, for I have worked hard to be happy—I have worked hard for the freedom and the unity of my native land. However my friends may disapprove of my course, they cannot deny me that. When anybody has been hard at work day after day for twenty years on the same great task, as I have been, and he sees then that all his labor has been in vain and his great work is a failure—can you blame him if he feels as if his life was as much a failure as his work? Our revolution has miscarried, miserably miscarried. The heaving mountain has brought forth a mouse. Our cause—I mean the cause for which I have labored, fought, and suffered—was decided a year ago, when Cavaignac's chain-shot crushed the only true socialistic revolution in the streets of Paris. Since then I have been a man whose strength has been broken, whose life has been

ruined. I can only enrich the soil with my blood, that it may bring forth in future days the seed of a better freedom than that which can now thrive only in the shadow of thirty-six thrones which must not be touched, and of countless churches which are looked upon as holy places."

"And your family?" asked Wolfgang, quietly but decidedly. "Your wife? Your children?"

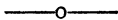
Deep, dark shadows fell upon Munzer's features.

"My children," he said, slowly and as if speaking to himself, "are provided for. And my wife——"

He rested his head on his hand, and murmured.

"Poor wife! You deserved a better fate! It was an ill-starred day, the day on which we saw each other for the first time. We might not have been happy, either of us, but we should have been spared at least the sorrow of having made each other wretched. Ah, Wolfgang! human life is a sad, mournful thing! I should not like to live it over again even if I could thus become a god. I shudder at this working which has no result, this seeking which never finds, these joys which vanish like smoke, and these sorrows that consume us with their fire! All this is sad enough when we experience it in ourselves; but the measure of woe overflows when our sufferings cause others to suffer, or when their grief is added to our own."

He pressed his friend's hand and went off through the wood in the direction where the outposts of the corps stood, under Cajus's command, in the immediate neighborhood of the enemy.



CHAPTER XVII.

THE moon had already risen, and was bathing the tops of the pine-trees in its ghost-like light, while the night-breeze was gently rustling in the branches. Below, however, between the mighty trunks, it was still oppressively hot after the fierce summer day. The unhappy man walked on, as if in a dismal distressing dream. He did not think of the path—only of death! He cocked his

rifle mechanically, and placed the butt-end on the ground. Then it occurred to him that the sharp explosion would startle out of their sleep all the poor fellows who were now resting from their bloody work—that it might even betray their position to the enemy. So he took his rifle up again, with that self-denial with which a weary traveller goes by a shady resting-place in order to reach the sooner the end of his journey. He breathed more freely as he stepped out of the close, dark air, upon a clearing in the forest where Degenfeld had posted the main-guard. They were too near the enemy to light a fire ; the men were lying, wrapped in their cloaks, in the shade of the trees, on the mossy carpet ; a few only were walking about in the open space, where the moonlight fell glittering upon the bright barrels of stacked rifles, discussing in an undertone the events of the day.

Munzer threw himself, at some distance from the others, on the ground, staring fixedly before him, and with his heart in an agony. A large figure detached itself from the dark back-ground of the wood opposite him, and came across the clearing. It was Cajus. He stretched himself alongside of Munzer and said :

“ You seem to suffer more than usually, doctor ? ”

“ I do not possess a body of iron like yourself.”

“ Your body would be strong enough—I know such things—if your heart were only to beat less restlessly in your bosom.”

“ Show me how to do that.”

“ Live as I do, and I wager all I have to nothing, that you will never more complain of palpitation of the heart.”

“ My life never had a sunny spring day ! ”

“ I know. But for that I should never have cared a copper for you any more than for all the rest of our miserable race. Only unhappy men understand each other. I hate happy men ; they belong to a different race. There is as little in common between them and us as between white people and red-skins ! ”

Munzer looked into the deep-brown face, framed in an immense shaggy beard, upon which the full light of the moon was then falling, so that the white in the eye shone supernaturally. He felt as if he had never before seen Cajus thus ; involuntarily he moved a little from the extraordinary companion.

"Don't move, doctor," said Cajus, with a low, hoarse laugh. "Although a good deal of blood has stained my hands, it has all been shed in honest fight or grim self-defence. But I know that a day will come when I shall not kill, but murder, murder with delight. I have anticipated that joyful time for thirty days."

"And who is it that has offended you so grievously?"

"A near relative of your young friend, that aristocrat whom I hate for the sake of his mere name, as I hate his whole accursed race. I mean Colonel Baron Gisbert Hohenstein!"

Cajus ground his teeth with fury, and murmured a fearful curse in his shaggy beard.

"How can that be?" Munzer asked in amazement. "I do not think you have seen the colonel more than twice or thrice since you came to Cologne. Were you ever before——?"

"In Cologne?" said Cajus, interrupting him; "I am not an American by birth, although I am a naturalized citizen. I was born in Cologne; my real name is—but that does not matter. My father was a drunkard, my mother still worse; I grew up in the very mud and mire of society. But I was proud, very proud, and wanted to rise in the world. I loved a girl, who had grown up in poverty like myself, but who had kept herself pure and chaste in the midst of temptation, and for her sake I also had remained honest and blameless. Colonel Hohenstein was then an ensign in my company. He was a wild, lawless creature, and had long been running after my girl. One night he met me in the street, walking home with her; we lived in the same house, and she had been so late at work in a family which was to leave town early next morning. He was patrolling the streets, and had us both arrested. They carried us to the guard-house; I was thrown into a dark hole; the poor girl I know not where. But when they dismissed me next day, they brought the corpse of the unfortunate girl home. She had drowned herself in the river to hide her disgrace. A fortnight later I was once more arrested and tried for an attempt to murder my superior officer. There were attenuating circumstances, as they called it, and my sentence was commuted to imprisonment for life with a chain and ball. One day, when we

were cutting trees on the glaciis, I escaped and made my way to France. Then I went to Spain, fought against the corsairs, was captured, sold as a slave into the interior of Morocco, and condemned to work as a slave for ten years. My master called me Cajuś, and when I at last escaped and reached America, I kept the name in order to be constantly reminded of what I owed the great, rich, and mighty gentleman at home. I do not mean to tire you by telling you all the adventures of a man who has no home, and does not care to have one. I have fought under all flags against tyranny; my body has more scars than any great general has decorations. But all the wounds are nothing in comparison with the one great wound, which has poisoned my existence, and which burns and burns and will burn till he who gave it shall expire at my feet. But what is that?"

Great commotion had suddenly arisen in the quiet camp. All were crowding around a patrol which had just returned from a reconnoissance, bringing back with them apparently several suspicious persons. "They are spies! Don't stand upon ceremony—knock them down!" A lachrymose voice was heard between these outcries: "I only went because he offered me so much money; let me go, dear, kind gentlemen, let off a poor boy who has a blind mother at home!"

Cajuś and Munzer had risen and approached the group. The moon was shining brightly, and all details were distinctly visible. One of the two companions was, what his language had indicated, a half-grown boy from the neighborhood; his coarse face was streaming with tears. The other was a slender, finely-built fellow, in a dark blouse; a yellow straw-hat, under which an abundance of dark curls became visible, covered his head, as he turned with great animation to the two gentlemen.

"Do not press so hard, my good man," said the slenderer of the two to one of the men who held him still by the wrist; "you really will hurt me. Good evening, gentlemen, could you not tell your men to be a little less awkward in their attentions to a couple of harmless travellers."

It was a melodious voice that uttered these words half jestingly, half angrily. Munzer started back as if he had been struck by lightning. Could it really be? She here? . . . His heart, unable to hold the flood of feelings which the

tones of this voice had suddenly aroused, beat as if it would burst.

"I shall soon cure you of your merriment, young man," said Cajus, with dark scorn. "I suppose you could not wait for the time when you were to receive your commission? Bind that boy there, and knock him down if he opens his mouth and cries any more. With this fine young gentleman, we'll make shorter process!"

He drew the short, sharp dagger which he always wore in his belt. With one leap Munzer stood before him, holding his arm. "Are you mad, Cajus?" and then taking him violently aside, he whispered into his ear: "Don't you see it is a woman?"

"Oh!" said Cajus, "is that it? Let him go, men! The doctor knows the young man, and will be security for him."

The slender fellow, who had uttered a low cry of joyous surprise upon hearing Munzer's voice, no sooner felt his hands free, than he ran up to him, wound his arms around him, and whispered in a low, caressing tone: "At last I have you again! At last!"

Munzer tore himself with vehemence from this embrace. "Let us end this comedy, madam," he said, "the place and the time are hardly suitable for a farce!"

Antonia drew back a few steps and looked at Munzer with sharp, searching eyes. Then she took his hands, and said: "Bernhard! You will not refuse me an interview which I have sought at the risk of my life. This little favor you surely owe a woman whom you have loved?"

Without waiting for an answer she took Munzer by the arm, and drew him out of the bright moonlight into the dark shade at the edge of the forest; and then, as if she did not feel quite safe yet, upon a narrow path which led through this part of the forest. Munzer yielded; he was afraid of Cajus's sharp, pitiless eye, and of the curiosity of the men. At the same time he felt the power of the charm which this woman practiced with irresistible force, in spite of all his efforts to withdraw from its magic circle.

They had reached the forest before a word had been uttered by either. At their feet the mountains fell off in green slopes and terraces, one after the other, till they merged into the plain where the camp-fires of the enemy

shone brightly through the darkness. Thick mists and clouds drifted slowly along, allowing the moon to come forth at intervals. The neighing of horses, and low voices calling to each other unintelligible words, the chirping of insects in the heather, and now and then the short, hoarse cry of a night bird—these were the only sounds breaking the general silence. The air was oppressively close; glow-worms were shining in the grass, or drew their wide rings around dark bushes in which not a leaf was stirring.

Antonia had seated herself on the stump of a tree which a storm had torn up by the roots. Munzer stood by her side, gazing down into the plain. He was almost stunned, hardly knowing how he had come here, hardly conscious of her who was by him. A low sob reminded him of her presence. He approached Antonia.

“Have pity on me!” said Antonia, sinking upon her knees and holding up her hands imploringly.

“Have you any pity on me?” asked Munzer. “If this is not a blind accident merely in your adventurous life, what brings you here, after you have yourself torn the last tie that bound us to each other?—here, to me, who ask for nothing but to be alone?—to me, who desire nothing more ardently than never again to be reminded of the maddest of dreams which my poor suffering brain has ever dreamt?”

He beat his forehead and turned away from Antonia, who still remained in the same position.

“Rise, Antonia!” he said, as the same low sobbing once more fell upon his ear. “What do you mean by this scene? Rise!”

“Not until you have told me that you believe me when I tell you that since you kissed my lips the last time, no man has ever touched even my hand!”

“I believe you to be too proud to tell a falsehood,” said Munzer, after a short pause.

Antonia started up, seized his hands before he could prevent it, pressed them to her bosom and to her lips. “Thanks, Bernhard, thanks! a thousand thanks! That was all I wanted to hear! Now I can go again. I wanted nothing else from you. I do not want anything else!”

She let go his hands, took the hat which had fallen upon the grass, pressed it upon her dark curls, and turned to go.

“Antonia!” exclaimed Munzer, “are you mad? Where are you going?”

“How can I stay when you disown me?”

“I do not disown you. I cannot let you leave me, Antonia!”

With a low cry of delight the passionate woman threw herself upon his bosom and covered his lips with burning kisses. Then she said: “Now give me your arm, and let us walk up and down, and let me tell you how I came to engage in this mad freak. You see, Bernhard, my pride suffered under the coldness with which you often treated me, but much more under the consciousness that you held me as a master holds his slave. I wanted to try if I could not keep the vow I had sworn to myself when my husband died, that no other man should ever be to me more than my toy or my slave. I threw down the gauntlet to you, when you met one evening the painter at my house. I swear it, Bernhard, I did it with beating heart, in the anxious hope you would not take it up. You did it, nevertheless, and in a manner which left me no doubt as to your determination to break with me. The painter thought he must profit by the rupture, and proposed the plan which we carried out the next day. But he soon found out his mistake. The fool! As if the shoes which serve us to walk from one place to another, were not cast aside as soon as they are no longer of use to us! As if I would flee from you, and follow a man like him! At the first railway station I sent him off. I do not know what has become of him. But I have wandered about, in despair at having lost you, and in the hope of finding you again. Every night I hoped I had overcome this childish weakness, and every morning I awoke from my feverish dreams with the one certain conviction that I could not live without you. I had found it unbearable not to be as free as I had been, and now I could not endure it to miss your mastery over me. I had no other thought, no other wish, but to be your slave, to bear your worst temper for the sake of one kindly look from your proud eyes! Thus I dreamt and longed and suffered, till I could bear it no longer. One fine morning I resolved to go in search of you, were it only to die at your feet. I knew you had joined the revolutionary army—you had often spoken of the necessity of fanning this spark into

a bright blaze. A gentleman whom I happened to meet in Switzerland, where he had sought an asylum even before he was threatened, confirmed my supposition ; he had seen you and spoken to you frequently. He also mentioned the names of Wolfgang and Degenfeld, and that you were in the same corps with them. I left immediately. I reached the watering-place a few miles from here. There I was told I could not proceed by rail any farther, as the rails were all torn up ; besides, I would have to make my way through both armies. My resolution was soon formed. I assumed a male costume, hired a carriage at great expense, drove to your headquarters, where I pretended to be a student who wished to enlist in Degenfeld's brigade, and was sent in this direction. But the driver would not or could not go any farther. I took a boy, who offered to be my guide, and plunged into these mountains. In the afternoon we heard firing ; then I thought I must be near your corps, and so I followed the sound of the firing, to the great horror of the boy, whom all my prayers, threats, and promises could hardly induce to remain with me. It was a hard journey. We marched straight through the forest, and often lost our way, coming every now and then to places which proved utterly impassable. Suddenly, towards evening, when we hoped we were at our journey's end, the firing ceased. I had to go on at haphazard, and good fortune favored me, for it brought me to you, my love ! my darling ! And now I do not mean to leave you again—for surely, Bernhard, you will not refuse to come with me ? They all say the fight is over, and all is lost. I believe it is so. What more can you do among these sorry people ? What more can be done for a cause which is hopelessly lost ? ”

“ One can die for it ! ” replied Munzer.

“ I will do whatever you do, Bernhard ! I am ready to die with you, if I cannot live with you. Do not think I have no strength or courage ; I am very strong ; I can fire a rifle as well as another ; I can manage a wild horse like the best of horsemen. I will fight by your side ; you shall be satisfied with your comrade ; you shall have no cause to blush for him. ”

Thus spoke the passionate woman, caressing and cajoling her listener. Munzer's heart was torn by contending feel-

ings. A few hours ago he thought he had wound up his accounts with the world, and now she must come and meet him, with the intoxicating music of her voice, with her ravishing beauty which fascinated his eyes, with her glorious mind that inflamed his imagination, and her rapturous heart beating in harmony with his own, till the two flames mingled with each other, and, united, rose to the heavens in fiery embrace ! He told her all that stirred up his soul to its uttermost depths ; he thrust her from him, as she wound herself trembling around him, and then again he seized her fiercely and covered with his kisses her lips, her eyes, and her beautiful hair, damp with the night-dew, amid the most tender vows of love.

Thus lost in one another, they had not perceived that a thunder-storm had come up, after announcing itself for some time by low mutterings and grumbings in the heavens. A sudden, blinding flash of lightning was instantaneously followed by a tremendous clap of thunder, which echoed far into the mountains and reminded them of their danger. Munzer thought he knew the direction in which the camp lay, but the farther they went into the wood, the more they became convinced that they had chosen the wrong path. They did not ascend the mountain as they ought to have done, and all of a sudden the path led down a steep slope. Perhaps they had passed the camp and were now coming to it from another direction, for the forest became lighter and lighter. But they soon found out their mistake, for they reached the edge of the wood. Nothing was to be seen. The darkness was intense ; black night swallowed up every detail ; the moon was completely hid behind the storm-clouds, and big warm drops were beginning to fall.

"It is all in vain," said Antonia. "We must wait here till morning."

"But what is to become of you, poor child?"

"Am I not with you?"

A rock, projecting far out, formed a kind of open cave, which shepherds and huntsmen seemed to have used more than once for a night's shelter, for the floor was abundantly covered with dry, loose moss. Munzer gathered as much as he could and made a couch for Antonia.

He had taken the rifle from his shoulder. Antonia sat

down beside him ; he held her in his arms and leaned her head against his bosom. Soon her regular breathing made him aware that she had fallen asleep, exhausted by the unusual fatigue of the day. He let her softly glide down upon the moss, and rested his head against the rocky wall of the grotto.

When he awoke, the gray morning was breaking through the misty atmosphere. He rose gently and stared with sombre eyes at Antonia. An evil dream seemed to oppress the sleeper. Her dark brows contracted as with pain, her cheeks were burning, but her hands were cold, and chills seemed to convulse her body. Munzer bent over her.

"Wake up, Antonia !"

She opened her large eyes and looked confused around her.

"Ah ! It is you !" she said with a deep sigh. "God be thanked ! That was an ugly dream ! The colonel was holding me in his arms ; I could not cry nor move, and his icy breath was chilling my heart, and his black eyes were sending out fiery arrows, which pierced my brain. God be thanked it was but a dream !"

Suddenly she laughed aloud. "Here I have been sleeping?" she cried. "In a cavern? What a splendid apartment ! Ah ! But I slept so sweetly, so sweetly ! What a pity that ugly dream troubled me at last !"

She threw herself on Munzer's bosom and kissed him. Munzer gently put her from him. "We must go, Antonia ! There is no time to lose !"

"Come !" said Antonia.

They left the grotto and looked around. They could not see much as yet. A dense fog floated in waving masses over the meadows, now allowing green islands to rise from the gray sea, and then swallowing them up again. The forest from which they had come was lost to sight. Munzer thought it was on one side, Antonia on the other ; they went first in this direction, then in that, and still the pine-trees which they sought would not show themselves. At last they saw them at some distance ; but a brook, which had changed the meadow into a swamp, prevented the wanderers from approaching in a straight line. They turned aside, and instantly the wood was lost again in the mist.

All of a sudden they found themselves near the stump on which they had been sitting last night. To the left of it, about a hundred yards farther on the edge of the wood, the little path led to the camp of the corps.

"All is right now," said Munzer. "But it was high time. What is that?"

A peculiar noise of bushes being trod down, and then again a low sound as of many men marching with equal step on a soft ground, and between, every now and then, a word of command—thus it came up the hill.

They stood still and listened breathless into the mist.

"The enemy!" whispered Munzer, taking down his rifle.

"What are you going to do?"

"Give a warning before it is too late!"

He fired; almost at the same instant several shots fell, which had been fired at haphazard by the approaching troops, and Munzer fell at Antonia's feet.

With a wild cry she sank down by his side and raised his bleeding head. She thought he had been killed, but she soon perceived that the ball had only glanced along the temple, and that all hope was not lost. She pressed her handkerchief on the gaping wound; she tore her silk fichu from her neck and bound it around his head. In vain! The blood but ran all the faster over her trembling hands. She loosened her belt, tore off her blouse, and wrapped it around him; she sat down on the grass and placed the dear head on her lap; she saw nothing but the flowing blood, nothing but the fading face. What did it matter to her that shots were fired on the right and on the left, that gray forms slipped by her on all sides, that soon the firing became more serious, large masses being engaged, and that at last the mist rose, and so deprived her of the only protection which had concealed her until now, as by a miracle, from the eyes of the attacking party.

One company after another came up, sharp-shooters on the flanks, at the beat of the drum, charging the edge of the wood, which it seemed was held by the revolutionary troops, and obstinately defended. Again and again the bugles gave the signal for retreat. At last, however, they had apparently succeeded in gaining a hold on the forest; for the trees now resounded with the cheers of the soldiers

and the crack of the rifles. A new battalion came up to the support of the troops who were already engaged in the forest. The sharp-shooters deploying in line, approached the spot where Antonia was sitting motionless, with her terrible burden.

"There are some more dogs of republicans!" cried one, aiming at Antonia.

"Save your cartridge, my man!" said an officer, knocking up the barrel of the gun with his sword.

Lieutenant Todwitz had seen that the man who was lying on the ground, with his head in the lap of the handsome young fellow, was either dead or grievously wounded; the sight had excited his pity. He rushed up to the group. Antonia looked at him, with fixed, imploring eyes. She knew the young officer well; she had danced with him often enough in the city.

"Save him, Baron Todwitz!" she cried, forgetting everything else.

The officer was petrified. "Was this Antonia?—The brilliant Antonia Hohenstein?—In this costume?—In such a position?"

Nevertheless, he was a good fellow, and not so hardened against the impulse of doing a heroic thing, that he was not touched by what he saw.

"I will do what I can," he said; "but I fear that will be little enough."

A superior officer came galloping up. From a distance already he cried, with a voice hoarse with fury:

"Lieutenant Todwitz! why in three devils' name do you not advance into the wood?"

Antonia uttered a cry when she heard this voice.

"For God's sake, Todwitz," she besought him, "do not let me fall into his hands! Rather kill me and him!"

Todwitz stood fearfully embarrassed, but Colonel Hohenstein was already near him. He checked his foam-covered horse: "Why the devil, lieutenant——"

His eye fell upon Antonia, who stared at him with a glance of despair and deadly hatred. Todwitz's embarrassed air told him all the rest. He broke out into a hoarse laugh.

"Well, that is divine, 'pon honor!" he cried. "A sister of charity of the latest fashion!"

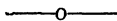
He alighted from his horse, threw the bridle to an orderly, and approached Antonia.

"Be reasonable, Antonia," he said in a low tone. "Don't you see he is bleeding to death. What will that help you? Let our surgeon take care of him, and you will at least preserve his life."

Antonia was about to reply, but the fearful excitement had exhausted her strength; she broke down, fainting, at the very moment when a couple of soldiers, at the colonel's command, took the wounded man from her arms.

The colonel looked down, gnawing his lips. Then he raised his head and said in a rough tone of command:

"Have both of them carried to the rear, lieutenant! I hold you responsible for them!" Then he added, somewhat more civilly: "And, Todwitz, manage it so that the thing does not become too public! You know how to get along with women!"



CHAPTER XVIII.

IT was owing to Munzer's presence of mind alone that the remaining portion of Degenfeld's brigade, and in fact the whole revolutionary army, was not more seriously defeated on that fatal day. The surprise intended by the commanders of the government troops had failed. Of course, the advantage was not very great; still, the final decision was at least postponed for some time. It appeared soon that not only a detachment, but the whole of the enemy's left wing, had been engaged; while a powerful cannonade, which soon after began in the direction of the fortress, indicated that the centre also and the right wing had gone into action.

Degenfeld and Wolfgang had hurried to the support of the outposts as soon as the first shots had fallen, taking the whole battalion at double quick down to the edge of the wood. They had thrown themselves with the bayonet upon the regular troops and driven them back; then they had held

the wood for some time against most furious attacks, till at last they had been outflanked by the superior numbers of the enemy, and compelled to fall back. It was only with great difficulty they succeeded in escaping from the forest ; many a brave companion fell on the slippery, mossy ground, never to rise again ; and when they had crossed the little river near the village, and attempted to take a new position in order to give their exhausted men a little time to rest, their numbers were sadly reduced. Not two-thirds of all the gallant young men who had answered this morning so cheerfully the call of their leaders, were now to be found, and many of these were more or less seriously wounded. And now only the friends noticed to their dismay that Munzer, whom they had thought in the ranks of Cajus's company, was not among those who were safe. They went in search of Cajus, who had been seen a short while before going to the open space behind the first houses of the village, where Balthasar was helping the surgeon to attend to the wounded. They found him seated on the ground. Balthasar was kneeling before him, and just then cutting the blouse from his broad chest and the muscular arm. To their first question whether he was seriously wounded, he replied : "No, but I cannot use my left arm." Upon their second question after Munzer, his face grew darker, and he replied savagely : "I thought he was with you ! Well, my good friend, what is it ? Pshaw ! Don't you see the ball is just under the skin. Let me see ! Cut the thing out and tie a piece of linen around it firmly—that's it ! Now you had better go and look after the others. I must rest a few minutes !"

He drew his hat close down upon his brow, closed his eyes, and leaned his shoulder against the wall.

Degenfeld and Wolfgang saw that the stoic, reserved as he was, did not wish to be questioned any further, and left him alone. They turned to some of Cajus's men ; they happened all to have been on outpost duty when Munzer left the guard with Antonia. They could give no information. The friends did not know what to think of Munzer. Either he had taken his own life, or he had fallen at the very beginning of the skirmish. Wolfgang feared suicide ; Degenfeld thought the latter supposition more likely.

"Leave me this consolation," he said. "I should be sorry

to see the image of a man who has been dear to me, marred by such an act. Let us not judge, lest we be judged! Who knows how soon we may be dependent ourselves on the kindly recollections of our friends."

He sighed deeply. Wolfgang tried to cheer the melancholy man, for whom he felt deep reverence. Degenfeld shook his head, sadly smiling.

"Ever since this campaign began," he said, "I have been pursued by those words of the poet, which filled the head of Scipio as he was sitting on the ruins of Carthage: The day will come!—The day has come. Our army is nothing more than a mass of fugitives; before the sun sets it will be scattered to the four winds. The revolution is at an end; the reaction can rejoice in its orgies with impunity. No! Not with impunity. For this is not the end of it; at best it can only be the beginning of the end. A people that has been treated so, can never be reconciled to its rulers. It may postpone the day of revenge for a long time, but the day will nevertheless come—a fearful day! I am glad I shall not see it; it is for you, my young friend, younger, stronger, and bolder as you are. Your only care then will be to keep the revenge of the people from being too bloody. And as we are speaking of death, Wolfgang—if I should fall, for that is possible, at least—do not forget what I told you of my brother. I have written to him that you will in all probability come to him; take him my last greeting, and tell him I should willingly have spared him this grief, but the twin-stars that rose at our birth, have pointed out to us different ways, and my way came to an end here. Will you think of it?"

Wolfgang pressed his friend's hand in speechless emotion. Degenfeld rewarded him with a cheerful smile, and said:

"My heart is light, like that of a man who has put his house in order. Let us do our duty cheerfully to the end. To arms, my men!"

Degenfeld's sharp eyes had seen correctly. The army of the rebels was, on this wing at least, nothing but a mass of *débris*. In wild disorder, which could hardly be called a retreat, ever new crowds of horsemen, of infantry, and of cannons, came crowding across the bridge and into the village. In vain did the leaders on this side of the river endeavor to

form them in line. The cry raised by a few cowards, "We are outflanked!—They attack us in the rear!" had created a panic among the men, which prevented any important order from being properly executed, and which resulted in absolute despair, when the enemy unmasked several batteries on the opposite heights, which commanded the position, and by a few well-aimed shots spread death and destruction among the crowds rushing towards the bridge. All that could be done under such circumstances was to keep the enemy as long as possible from crossing the river, so as to give more time to those who were in the act of coming over, and to organize the retreat in a more orderly manner. The fire of the attacking party was vigorously returned from the windows of the houses in the village, but higher up the river the defence became every moment visibly weaker; already some detachments of regular troops were seen attempting to ford the little river at some shallow places under the shelter of their batteries. Degenfeld saw the danger instantly. "Make haste, Wolfgang!" he called out to his friend; "take half of our men and gather on the way whatever you find; I will try to hold my own here for a while!"

Wolfgang would have preferred remaining near Degenfeld, and fighting the battle by his side to the end, although the result was no longer doubtful. But the sense of duty was stronger than the inclination of his heart. He pressed Degenfeld's hand with an earnest, eloquent look. Degenfeld turned away to conceal his emotion. But when the young man was already at a distance of a few yards, he suddenly hurried after him, embraced him, and said: "We shall not meet again. Farewell, Wolfgang!"

With this painful cry still in his ears, Wolfgang hastened, at the head of his command, to the point in danger. As he passed the house behind which the wounded were lying, he saw Balthasar still indefatigably at work. He wanted to take his faithful companion with him, but Balthasar was unwilling to leave his post. "Here is my place, my dear sir," he said. "No one shall say that Balthasar left his post. Take me with you when you return."

"When I return!" murmured Wolfgang, hurrying on. His soul was filled with sad anticipations. All he saw around him was too well calculated to rob the most resolute

man of his composure. Fear, confusion, excessive despondency everywhere. Battalions which had not yet been under fire, rushed by in disorder ; a battery which would have been of immense value in its proper place, drove right into the crowd of fugitives and increased their dismay. "All is lost! We are surrounded! We shall be cut off!" These cries of treason and cowardice were flying all about, and carried ruin with incredible swiftness to every part of the line. One of the higher officers, whom Wolfgang found waiting on his horse surrounded by his staff, and whom he asked for reinforcements, replied, shrugging his shoulders: "You may have my whole division if you can lead the men into fire."

"We can only rely upon ourselves, captain," said faithful Ruchel, who had remained by Wolfgang's side.

"So it seems," replied the latter. "I have not even seen Cajus anywhere."

"He must have been left on the other side," said Ruchel. "I saw him one of the last, leaning on his rifle, and looking as grim as—Great heavens! there they are coming in crowds across the river, and our blockheads hardly fire at all."

"March! March!" commanded Wolfgang.

It was high time that the little corps should take position there. They found men enough in the orchards and between the willows along the river, but they had no ammunition and no leaders. Wolfgang formed his men in a column, and threw himself, after a sharp, quick fire, with the bayonet upon the enemy, whose ranks were seriously disorganized by the crossing. What he had hardly thought possible came to pass. The regulars gave way under the unexpected shock. The river bank was once more in the hands of the insurgents, and a well-aimed fire which Wolfgang kept up on the whole line, and especially near the bridge, had at least this effect, that the attack of the government troops was checked for a time.

But at other points fate had been all the more adverse to the republican troops. Wolfgang's departure with half of Degenfeld's brigade had reduced the numbers more than had been foreseen. This weakening of the defence, and the disgraceful flight of the battery, gave the enemy an advan-

tage by which they profited instantly. They succeeded at the same time in setting the village on fire, and in thus depriving the insurgents of their best shelter.

Degenfeld had so far directed the measures for the defence with the greatest coolness, and it was due solely to his heroic example that the men were still remaining in a position which could evidently be held only by men who were willing to risk their own lives in order to save the lives of others who were less brave. For so it was. If the position was lost before the republicans could accomplish their retreat into the mountains, where they would find at least comparative safety, fearful carnage would be the consequence, and the whole wing would probably be cut down ! The enemy was only prevented from crossing by the incessant, well-aimed firing of sharp-shooters posted on both sides of the bridges, while the village itself was in flames, and almost entirely deserted. Both parties, though on opposite sides of the river, knew this perfectly well ; the conflict became more bitter, although it could not fail to be continued for some time yet, as the great distance at which they fought made up for the inferior arms of the insurgents, and the shelter they found behind trees and walls for the immense numerical superiority of the enemy.

Degenfeld was standing on a hillock, from which he directed the defence. A single tree stood on the eminence, affording scanty protection, but the major did not think of that. He only removed the small telescope through which he watched the manœuvres of the enemy, in order to examine with his unaided eyes the position of his own men, or to call out to them with his calm, clear voice, some word of encouragement or some order, which was heard far and near with perfect distinctness. He knew that as long as he stood in this prominent place, the brave men whom he had commanded now for so many weeks would not think of giving way, and this made his carriage appear so calm, and his voice so full and clear. Many a half-despairing eye looked up at the noble, erect figure, as the morning breeze was playing with his brown hair, and drew new courage from this image of courage, which appeared unassailable in its calm serenity.

And yet in his heart there was little peace and calmness.

In the few minutes during which the balls were whistling around him like hail, or plunged into the tree and tore up the ground at his feet, his whole life passed before his mind's eye in a series of clear and distinct pictures. The hopes and aspirations of his youth ; his ardent love, rejected and yet unforgotten ; his lonely, pleasant studies ; the sweet habit of a privileged position ; agreeable and friendly relations with others, which became less harmonious and less pleasing as he came out more boldly with the result of his studies ; his newly-won convictions ; then came the evil days when the rupture must be made public, and the numberless crowd of adversaries fell upon him like a fierce pack of hounds, especially the man who had so long persecuted him with bitter enmity, and whom fate to-day placed in open battle against him. It was the ninety-ninth regiment which was most bent upon forcing the position. He saw the battalion which he had so long commanded, manœuvre against him, and partly at least execute the very movements which he had been the instrument of introducing into the army. He heard the conical bullets whistle around him, in the invention of which he had taken a large part. A strange sensation at this moment overcame the unfortunate man. He seemed to have a double existence, to be on this side and on the other at the same time, to fight with the regulars against the rebels, and with the rebels against the regulars. He was impatient that the latter did not make better use of their superiority in arms and numbers ; he murmured the orders that ought to be given in order to defeat at once this rebellious rabble ; and the next moment he saw his boys with their blackened faces, and was filled with admiration for their heroic courage. His heart was divided ; but one thing remained clear to him—that he would not fall alive into the hands of the enemy. He drew the pistol half out of his belt—but the moment had not come yet. He saw the enemy bring up a second battalion to the front, and a third and a fourth behind that as a reserve, the whole forming a column of attack with the front towards the bridge. There was no doubt now ; they were going to force the passage across the river. He hastened down from his eminence to carry all available troops to the threatened point. At that moment a ball wounded him in his right arm. He took the sword in his left and cried : “Here ! To

me!" when a second ball shatters his left knee, and he fell stunned, with his face forward. Like lightning the sad news flew through the whole line that the major had been killed. "All is lost! Everybody for himself!" In vain did Cajus and some others try to stop the fugitives; they threw aside guns and cartridge-boxes and hastened away from the fire at the very moment when the battalions of the enemy debouched upon the bridge, occupying this key to the whole position, and at the same time pushing their masses boldly across, as the other side was scarcely any longer defended.

A few men, standing near Degenfeld when he fell, had lifted him up and carried him out of the fire to one of the flying hospitals. They might have saved themselves the trouble. There was not a single surgeon there; the few mortally wounded—for all the others had tried to escape—were attended to by Balthasar, who went from one to the other, wetting the parched lips with water which he drew from the village well near by.

In Balthasar's arms Degenfeld recovered his consciousness.

"How goes the battle?"

"I believe all is lost," replied the faithful Samaritan. "They are fleeing in all directions."

"Then you ought to escape, too, my friend. I need no one to help me die."

Platoon fire at a little distance and wild cheers proved the close approach of the enemy.

"Flee, Balthasar!" said Degenfeld, drawing his pistol. "You cannot afford a moment longer."

"I shall not leave you and these unfortunate men," replied Balthasar, gently but firmly.

The regulars broke forth from between the houses. Lieutenant Hinkel, a beardless youth of nineteen, saw Degenfeld lying there, and came rushing up to him with drawn sword, crying at the same time with his squeaking voice: "Surrender, major!"

Degenfeld raised himself on his sound arm; a contemptuous smile played around his lips; he placed the mouth of his pistol to his temple and drew the trigger. His body sank slowly back; before the disfigured head touched the ground, his heroic bosom had drawn its last breath.

His fading eye had escaped seeing his mortal enemy, who came galloping up from the burning village at the head of a group of officers.

Hinkel approached him to report that "Major Degenfeld——"

"Dead or alive?"

"Dead, colonel!"

"Go to the devil!" exclaimed the colonel, furiously. "We wanted to catch the dog alive. You have spoilt all the fun. Where is he?"

Hinkel pointed with his sword at the deceased. The colonel spurred his reluctant horse close up to the dead man, and looked from his height down upon the pale, calm face. The pistol, which the stiffened hand was still holding, and the drops of black blood which were slowly trickling from the wound in the temple, showed that Degenfeld had known but too well what his enemies wished.

The colonel did not seem able to tear himself from the fearful sight; he murmured unintelligible words through his firmly-closed teeth. He was a good hater, but he hated no one as he had hated this man. At last wild cries, that arose quite near him, tore him from the strange hallucination.

Balthasar had been horrified by Degenfeld's end, but still more when he saw the murderous soldiers fall like madmen upon the wounded and pierce the dying men with their bayonets. He had tried to protect the one near whom he was standing, with his own body; they had rudely and scornfully thrown him aside, and now half a dozen of them dragged him up amid fearful curses and pitiless blows with their muskets.

"Bring the dog here!" cried the colonel. "He seems to be a kind of regimental clerk or some such thing. What is that thick pocket-book in your absurd dress-coat there?"

It was a pocket-book which Cajus had lost when Balthasar had bandaged his wounded arm. The colonel, to whom it had been handed, looked into it.

"Ah!" he said; "here we have one of the ringleaders! That is the famous Cajus, gentlemen; would you have imagined that the scoundrel looked so much like a tailor? The fellow is an intimate friend of my nephew's. What do you know of the boy? Where is he?"

"My name is not Cajus," said Balthasar ; "nor do I know where my dear young master may be just now ; and if I knew it, I would not tell it."

"Ah ! Not tell it ? And why not ?" asked the colonel, with rude scorn.

"Because you are like the howling wolves," replied Balthasar ; and his eyes, usually so mild and gentle, burnt with holy indignation ; "because you stain the earth with the blood of men who are your betters, and because every good man must turn from you with horror."

"Well, gentlemen, how do you like that ?" said the colonel, turning in his saddle and smiling darkly ; "but we will cure that pale scoundrel of his preaching. Away with him ! Put him against the wall and stop his mouth with a few blue pills !"

The soldiers pushed Balthasar towards the house, the straw roof of which was blazing in bright flames, and placed him with his back to the wall. He was quite pale, but he looked with firm eyes, not winking for an instant, at his executioners. "I will stand still," he said, "but don't let me suffer much longer, and kill me at once !"

They drew back a few yards and looked at the colonel.

"Take aim !" said the colonel, who seemed to enjoy commanding the execution himself. "Fire !"

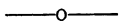
The rifles cracked ; Balthasar's mutilated body fell forward. The flames were blazing out of the low window, and the sparks flew into the faces of the murderers.

"Make haste and get yourselves away," the colonel shouted at the soldiers. "Let us go, gentlemen, or we shall be burnt alive here !"

He spurred his horse, and galloped off with his suite. Behind him the flames swept over the burning village, a funeral pile for many whose dead bodies lay on the spot which they had so long and so bravely defended for the sake of what was to them the righteous cause.

With the taking of the village by the regular troops the line of the insurgents was completely broken. The question for them was now only to reach the hills fighting, or to die in the attempt. Wolfgang, who had very well seen the dangerous position of his friends on the other side of the village,

was in despair ; but he could do nothing for them ; he could not spare a man ; and he owed his own life to the brave fellows who had stood so long in the most terrific fire for his sake, and whose only chances of safety depended upon him. He therefore gave the order to retreat with a heavy heart. Amid incessant firing, to keep the pursuing enemy at some distance, he reached the woods, which here fortunately came down the whole slope of the hill, and close to the village. As he turned a last glance down into the valley, he saw the regulars everywhere holding the position which he and his friends had occupied but an hour ago ; he saw black clouds of smoke with red tongues of fire flashing through the darkness, rolling slowly over the place where he had left those that were dearest to him, and he knew that this was the day which Degenfeld's prophetic soul had foretold long ago.



CHAPTER XIX. •

VAE VICTIS ! Terrible word, as old as the world and disgraceful to mankind. Art thou never to change thy fearful meaning ? Art thou ever to raise thy gorgon-head anew, whenever a bold champion falls down exhausted ? Must the soft voice of pity, which teaches us to respect the unfortunate, ever be weaker than the hoarse croaking of the thirst for revenge ? Will the conqueror never learn to bow before sacred Nemesis, which unmercifully punishes every self-elation ? and must pride always come before a fall ? Is it not bad enough to be conquered ?—to see the flag for which we have fought dragged through the dust ?—to live by the mercy of the conqueror ? Is the wound not painful enough, that it must be poisoned in addition ?—that groaning wives and pitiful children must also be made to feel the heavy hand that overthrew the father and the husband ? Art thou never to change thy fearful meaning, terrible word ?

Not yet a while. Thou art still lording it, like an evil demon, on the public square of every conquered town !

Thou art still worshipped by all who have the power in their hand, and all the more the greater their power is and the less they have to fear from the vanquished. Thou art still apt to throw the executioner's axe into the scales of death, whenever thou seest the side of mercy outweigh justice. Thou still thrustest the prisoner thou hast made in open, honest fight, into thy foul dungeons upon rotting straw ; or thou takest him out, when typhus does not do the work quickly enough, ram the ball down the barrel ! fire ! a flash ! a crack—*vae victis !*

Woe to the conquered ! were the words the beautiful woman heard ringing in her ears and in her heart, who was sitting a few weeks after the catastrophe at the window of a room in a small hotel of the conquered fortress. She was staring down into the street, where half-drunken soldiers practised their rude gallantry on some peasant women on their way home from market. But she saw and heard nothing ; for the one thought which by night and day now occupied her mind, excluded all things else : how could she save her beloved from imprisonment—or if that could not be done, at least from the penalty of death. What efforts she had made merely to gain access to him ! How she, the proud lady, had humbled herself ! How she had waited, amid contemptuously smiling officers, in the ante-chamber of generals, to hear, after a long trial of her patience, only that they could do nothing for her ! What difficulties she had overcome to obtain an audience from the king, who raised the kneeling woman graciously enough, but only to tell her that he could not interfere with the courts, and that justice must have its course ! And now the bitterest thought of all, that she herself must needs have brought this sad fate upon her beloved ! That without her appearance in the camp, Munzer would hardly have gone so far from his friends, and would certainly not have fallen alive into the hands of his enemies. Why had she not rather let him bleed to death ? Why had she in false sympathy handed over one victim more to the court-martial which held its daily sessions under its president, Colonel Hohenstein, and daily published its bloody sentences ?

To-morrow he was to appear before the court. What the result would be could not be doubtful, after all that had been

done. A few of the unfortunate men who had been captured on the battle-field, had already been shot on the glacis of the fortress. They had all died bravely. Not one had trembled ; not one had thought his life worth asking for. Would Munzer ask for mercy? Would he receive it if he should ask for it? No!—his fate was decided, his sentence pronounced, his death certain, unless a miracle should save him.

Antonia started up from her seat at the window and walked up and down the room wringing her hand. She was so completely lost in her grief, that she did not hear the knocking at the door till it had been several times repeated, and now became very loud. She thought it was the daughter of the house, who had shown much friendly sympathy for the poor, strange lady, and said, therefore, "Come in!" without turning to look at the door.

"Pardon me, my fair sister-in-law ——"

Antonia started up with a cry. It was he! He dared to appear before her! He!

She raised her arm, pale and trembling with fear and indignation, and pointed at the door.

"Still so cruel, fair sister-in-law?" said the colonel, in whose dark, immovable face only the searching black eyes seemed to live; "why, I had indeed flattered myself with the hope you would receive me more kindly to-day. But as you like it——"

He made a gesture as if he were going away. Antonia let her arm sink down.

"You are welcome!" she said, almost breathless.

The colonel smiled.

"Ah, now!" he said. "Well, if I am really welcome, you will permit me to lay aside my helmet and sword, and then we can chat more comfortably like good old friends, which we are, after all."

He had put his helmet on a table, and his sword in a corner; then he took a seat on the sofa, inviting Antonia, with a gesture that smacked as much of command as of courtesy, to take a seat by him.

He smiled again when Antonia hesitatingly obeyed him; he was tickled by the consciousness that he was master of the situation.

"I should have called on you long since, dear Antonia,"

he said, pulling off his gloves ; " but you must confess that the cruelty with which you formerly rejected the adoration which I offered to your beauty and your brilliant talents—I only remind you of the scene when I met, on a certain evening, my successful rival for the first time at your house—that this cruelty imposes upon me, as a duty required by honor, the very greatest caution."

" And what brings you here to-day ? " asked Antonia, fixing her eyes rigidly on the ground.

" I have observed your efforts in Munzer's behalf, as you may imagine, with painful interest," continued the colonel, as if he had not heard her question. " Painful, I say, partly because I foresaw how fruitless they must needs be, and partly because I found it impossible to offer you my services, much as I should have liked to do so. But you know yourself that this was out of the question, considering the position in which I stand to you, and in my official relations to the cause which found a most ardent adherent in so beautiful a lady."

" And what brings you here to-day ? " repeated Antonia.

" Listen to me, fair lady, a few moments, I pray. Perhaps you are not aware that I have already been actively at work in your interest. Without my mediation, the strange situation in which you were found by my men, might have had very disagreeable consequences for you. It is due to me alone that you have been permitted to stay here without molestation. You must admit that my proceedings have been *passablement* generous, in consideration of your feelings for me, which you have so consistently made known to the world. And I should like so much to do still more for you ! It is very painful to me, I assure you, that I must needs preside over the court which is to-morrow to decide on Munzer's fate ; and worse than that—that I am by accident judge and accuser in the same person. You see this pocket-book ? Would you believe it, that this dirty thing holds in it Munzer's life or death ? "

Antonia cast a quick glance at the pocket-book which the colonel held in his hand. She shuddered. The colonel smiled.

" I found this pocket-book on the battle-field. It belonged to a man who called himself Cajus, one of the leaders of the

republican movement and a special friend of Munzer. You will, therefore, no doubt know his name ; perhaps you enjoy the honor of a personal acquaintance. I am sorry to have to tell you that my men were rash enough to anticipate the court-martial, and to shoot the man on the spot. However, the loss can be borne, as the papers in this pocket-book, and especially a number of letters in Munzer's handwriting, furnish ample evidence. The letters are only short, mere notes if you choose ; but as the only written evidence which, as far as I know, exists of Munzer's treasonable transactions, they are of very special importance."

The colonel put the book back again in his pocket, buttoned his uniform slowly, and said :

"It appears that Munzer did not occupy a very prominent position in the rebel army ; nor has he, as far as I know, ever been connected with our army. If he had a friend among the judges who should present these facts in the most favorable light, and if these notes of which I spoke, and which have reference to his activity in organizing the rebellion before hostilities broke out, were not to appear at all in court, I should think a mild sentence, or perhaps even an acquittal, might not be impossible."

The colonel rose.

"And what is the price which this—friend demands?" asked Antonia in a low voice.

The colonel sat down again.

"Well, you put the question in a desperately practical form," he said, with his usual hoarse laugh ; "perhaps because you are yourself best able to answer it. In war, sweet Antonia, all is fair ; we are in the midst of war, and the advantage is undoubtedly on my side. A lady so eminently practical as you are will surely not blame me if I desire to profit by my advantage."

Antonia shuddered all over.

"Do not misunderstand me !" continued the colonel. "I am no love-sick swain. I want all or nothing, and I want it before to-morrow ; for if your lover is free to-morrow, or has the assurance of being free shortly, you might forget your gratitude. You may decide for yourself !"

He rose again.

"I have decided !" replied Antonia. "He would de-

spise a woman who should sacrifice her honor to save his life. And if he did not, I could make no such vague promises. I would rather drown my disgrace in the nearest pond. You see: I have decided!"

"As you like it," replied the colonel, coldly, putting on his sword and seizing his helmet; "but perhaps you may reconsider. A note from you, handed to me before nine o'clock to-night at my rooms, will reach me without fail. I shall provide for that. Till then, farewell, fair Antonia! and—reconsider!"

He made an ironical bow and went, after having cast from the door one of his dark, searching looks at Antonia, who was still sitting motionless on the sofa, pressing her hands upon her temples.

But he had no sooner closed the door, than she started up and began to walk up and down the room, wringing her hands and moaning as if in agony. All the wild passions which she had made such an effort to restrain, broke loose now like a swollen mountain torrent. Her cheeks were burning; her eyes flashed with indignation; she murmured wild curses, and then she threw herself again on the sofa, and groaned and sobbed amid floods of tears: "Oh, my God, my God! What must I do! what must I do?"

A pretty young girl looked in and said:

"Ah! Pardon me, baroness, but there is a lady outside who wants very much to see you."

"What is her name?"

"She would not tell me; but I think she also must have some relative among the prisoners; she looks so very sad."

"Show her in!" said Antonia, rising quickly and wiping the tears from her eyes and her cheeks.

The strange lady remained motionless when the girl had closed the door behind her, and drew back her veil. Antonia had never seen Clara; but one glance at the pale face, torn with anguish, told her who was standing before her. She stepped up to Clara quickly, and said, seizing her hands:

"You are—his wife!"

Clara's only answer were two tears, which rose in her eyes and slowly coursed down her pale cheeks. Antonia's hands trembled as she untied Clara's bonnet with busy almost humble kindness, took off her shawl, and led her to the sofa.

"Since when are you here?"

"Since yesterday."

"And have you seen him?"

"They will not let me see him; to-morrow—perhaps; but I rather think they only said so to get rid of me. Can you do nothing, nothing for me?"

And Clara looked anxiously at Antonia.

"Poor, poor woman!" murmured Antonia. She could not take her eyes from Clara's face; she had thought Munzer's wife would be so different! Had he really had no eyes for the goodness and gentleness that spoke from these pure, innocent features? Had he really had no ear for the melody of this soft voice? Had he ever been able to take this small white hand and drop it unfeelingly?

"Poor, poor woman!" she said again, lost in the torrent of thoughts which rushed upon her at once.

"I ask for nothing else. I only want to see him once more," Clara continued. "For his sake, not for my sake; for I know that although he does not love me as he loves you, his heart is still heavy when he thinks of me. I only want to tell him that I have forgiven him long ago, if I ever had anything to forgive, and that, if he must die, he may die in peace as far as I am concerned."

Deep, fierce grief lay on those pale lips, and still her voice sounded soft and firm.

"You look frightened at me," she said. "Have you any hope that he may be saved? I have none. I know he will not deny anything, nor recall anything. On the contrary, if they allow him to speak, he will use all the skill he possesses to give once more expression to his convictions. They will condemn him; he will die for the cause for which he has lived; but I want to see him, that he may not move a muscle, that his executioners may not see a trace of weakness in his eyes, that he may face death gloriously like a hero! He cannot die in peace without me. Do not think me presumptuous if I venture to say so—even before you!"

"For God's sake do not speak thus," cried Antonia. "You do not know how every word of yours tears my heart. Oh, my God! my God! What have I done?"

She threw herself at Clara's feet and covered her hands

with tears and with kisses. Clara tried to calm the impassioned woman.

"No! no!" sobbed Antonia. "Let me kneel before you; let me worship you as we pray to a saint. Oh! how fearfully I have sinned against you! But I will make amends for the wrong I have done you. I will! I swear it to you!"

She raised herself and walked a few times up and down the room with rapid strides; then she came back again to Clara, sat down by her and said, taking her hand, in a voice the calmness of which contrasted almost supernaturally with the passion she had just exhibited:

"Whom have you seen?"

Clara mentioned the names of several officers of high rank.

"You have not seen the right one," replied Antonia, with a dark smile. "I have seen all those men too; they would do nothing for me. I believe they could do nothing. But one man can do it—and he shall!"

"Who is that?"

Clara had to repeat the question several times. Antonia sat there, gnawing her under-lip and staring with sombre eyes at the ground. At last she started up as from a dream:

"Who is it? I cannot tell you. But you may rely on me. To-day, I fear, I cannot help you. But I think I can promise you that you shall see him to-morrow, after the court has given sentence. I hope for even more; but leave me till to-morrow—till to-morrow!"

"What do you mean to do?" asked Clara, frightened by the expression in Antonia's rigid features.

"I cannot tell you any more. But I beseech you, rely on me! Tell me something of yourself, of your children."

Clara's face was darkened by a passing shadow.

"I have but one child!" she said, in a low tone.

Antonia touched her forehead like one who does not trust his senses: "How? What did you say?"

"My boy is dead!" said Clara, in humble resignation. "A fortnight ago we carried him to his resting-place. He was sickly ever since last spring. Dr. Brand said it was an affection of the heart; perhaps he said so to console me for losing him so early—I do not know."

"Terrible, terrible!" murmured Antonia.

The clock of the nearest church-steeple struck seven. Antonia rose suddenly.

"You must leave me now," she said. "Remain quietly at your lodgings. I will send you word to-morrow. Do not be troubled if it reaches you only late in the day. I hope the message will be good."

She led Clara to the door and opened it for her.

Then she went to the writing-table, wrote quickly a few lines, sealed the note, and rang the bell.

"Carry this letter to—to its address. But please do it yourself."

"Certainly I will!"

"There will be no answer. The gentleman will probably bring it himself. You can let him in when he comes."

"Yes, ma'am!"

The girl looked up; the lady had been speaking in such a very singular tone! She was terrified when she saw Antonia's face so pale and almost disfigured.

"You are sick, ma'am," said the girl; "certainly you must be sick."

"Oh, no!" replied Antonia. "I am perfectly well. Make haste, child, and, do you hear? please carry the letter yourself!"

The girl felt very strangely. She had never heard such a voice; she had never in her life seen such a face. She could not forget it all that evening; she dreamt of it in the night. She knew that the great lady had a relative in the "state prisons," and she imagined that the fate of that prisoner might be at stake. That was, no doubt, the reason why the tall, dark-looking officer, the same to whom she had carried the lady's letter, had come to see her in the evening. They must have had very unpleasant things to transact, that dark-looking gentleman and the great lady, for she had listened a moment at the door, before showing him the way out again, and she had heard the words: "I have promised; but if you do not now keep *your* promise, I shall strangle you with my own hands;" to which the officer had said something about a "pocket-book" and "safety," which the girl had only half understood on account of his grim, hoarse laugh.

Next morning, when she brought up breakfast, the great

lady had, contrary to her habit, not even turned round from her desk on which she was writing, to acknowledge her well-meant "Good morning!" Then, about an hour later, she had rung the bell again, and in a short, rough tone of voice, and without turning her face from the window at which she was standing, she had ordered her to engage a carriage for ten o'clock, and to keep the bill ready.

What could have happened to the dear, great lady, who had been so kind all this time, and who was suddenly so haughty and imperious? Little Kate racked her brains as she was standing at the door, looking at the country wagons from which the horses had been taken out, and at the clock in the high steeple, the golden hand of which pointed nearly to ten o'clock. Suddenly a voice rather above her than by her side, asked: "Is the Baroness Hohenstein who lives here at home?" Little Kate looked up at the countryman who had asked the question. It was a giant of a man, in a coarse blue blouse and linen gaiters, with a smoothly-shaven, vacant face, and a pair of deep-set squinting eyes, which stared at her with an almost idiotic expression.

"I know she is in," said the huge creature; "show me up to her, little one. I have important news for her from—from her relatives."

"Are they good news?" asked little Kate.

"Why, certainly," said the man, "only make haste; I have to sell my oats and am in a hurry."

"Kate did not consider long. Good news from her relatives—that was exactly what the poor great lady wanted. She ran into the house, up the staircase, stopped before the door and said: "Well, you would better go in there at once, if you have good news."

The man opened the door cautiously, entered the room, and immediately pushed the bolt. As he turned round to Antonia, his face suddenly assumed so different an expression, that even little Kate would never have recognized him again.

"Who are you?" asked Antonia, involuntarily drawing back.

The man in the blouse put his finger on his lips and said quickly in a whisper:

"My name is Cajus. You will know me by my name.

I am here since yesterday in this disguise, to see what can be done for him. I know you have done all you could do, but that is little. Perhaps I can do more, but I want money for that, and I have none. That is why I come to you."

Munzer and Degenfeld had often spoken of Cajus in Antonia's presence. She could hardly doubt that the man before her was really Cajus. And yet—the colonel's account—the pocket-book which she had held in her hand.

"Do you know this pocket-book?" she asked, taking it out of her desk and holding it out to Cajus.

"I know it very well; it is my pocket-book, which was found by a poor fellow whom they shot for me. I heard so from a sergeant who is an old friend of mine, and who was standing by when they did the foul business. But I thought it was in the hands of the colonel!"

"So it was. Since yesterday it is in mine!" replied Antonia.

"Then I only hope you may not have paid too dear a price for it," said Cajus with a strange smile.

"What do you mean?" asked Antonia, whose cheeks had blazed up like fire at Cajus's last words.

"If the colonel told you, perchance, that he had given you the contents of the pocket-book as well as the book itself, he has told you a lie," replied Cajus. The most important papers, or rather the only important one, the letters which were really dangerous for Munzer and helped to cost him his life, lay this morning on the table before the court-martial."

Antonia staggered to a chair, on the back of which she rested her trembling hands. But at once she recovered herself, approached quite close to Cajus, and said in a hoarse, scarcely audible voice:

"Do not let me suffer! what do you know? Has he been sentenced?"

"Yes. I was told so by the same sergeant of whom I spoke, and who was at the court-martial. He and Lieutenant Todwitz voted for imprisonment for life in a fortress, in order to save Munzer's life at least; the others voted for capital punishment, under the lead of Colonel Hohenstein, who moved heaven and hell to bring about such a sentence.

At last, when they found it impossible to obtain unanimity, they resolved to recommend him for mercy to the king. Well, you know what *he* understands by mercy."

Antonia's cheeks had lost every drop of blood as she listened to Cajus's words with fixed eyes and open lips, as if she must not lose a word. Then her eyes became even more fixed, and through her firmly-set teeth she hissed the one word: "Revenge!"

Cajus's dark eyes flashed up fearfully as the word fell on his ears.

"I rather think the high-born lady and the plebeian have, in this case, interests which are almost identical. You love Munzer. I love him, in my way. You hate the colonel; you must hate him after Munzer's condemnation, if you never hated him before. I hate the colonel, and that from of old. Shall we go hand in hand, as our intentions are the same? You have what I want; perhaps I possess some qualities which might be desirable to you. Are you willing?"

"Yes!" said Antonia.

"Can you give me money?"

"Fifty gold pieces on the spot; in a few days as much as you want."

"Give them!"

Antonia went to her bureau and placed a roll of money in Cajus's hand.

"But what are you going to do? What can you do?"

"As long as there is life, there is hope!" replied Cajus. "I have experienced that in my own life more than a dozen times. Munzer's case is by no means so desperate yet. Much can be done before the official answer to his petition for mercy can return from Berlin; it will take at least a week. I have a number of warm friends in the army, especially in the ninety-ninth regiment, and a golden key opens many doors."

A gentle knock at the door interrupted the conversation, which had been carried on in a whisper.

"Who is it?"

"It is I—Kate. There is a letter here from Colonel Hohenstein."

Antonia went and opened the door. Her step was firm,

and her hand did not tremble as she broke the seal of the note which Kate had handed her. The one thought that was now uppermost in her mind overruled every other sensation.

The note ran thus :

“ Fairest of ladies !—I hasten to inform you that *our* efforts to save your friend have unfortunately proved fruitless. I did what I could. Perhaps your friend will receive his life at the hands of the monarch, although the court-martial, against my desire and my expectations, has condemned him. As the prisons here are overcrowded, and some of the prisoners must be carried elsewhere, I thought I would anticipate your wishes by ordering that your friend should be included in a detachment which will be sent to Cologne. I presume you will desire to remain as near him as possible ; and as I am just now overwhelmed with business, and shall, therefore, not be able to see you to-day, I wish you a pleasant journey—with the sentiment which you share.

“ Your G. H.”

“ Read it ! ” said Antonia, handing Cajus the note.

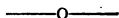
Cajus read it attentively.

“ Hm ! They want to send you off ; that is clear. But if that is so with Munzer, if he is to be tried once more in Cologne on account of the share he took in the riots there—then we have a better chance there than here. At all events, you ought to leave this very day. The less you make a mystery of your interest in Munzer’s fate, the better it will be. People do not expect that a person who so openly manifests his sympathies, is at the same time plotting in secret. If nothing can be done on the way, I’ll be in town as soon as the transport. Perhaps you will then have to be kind enough to conceal me for some time in your house. Until then you will have to provide some more money ; I will write when it is needed. One thing more ! It is probable they will watch your correspondence. We must therefore negotiate in our letters about a valuable painting which is on the way for you from Italy. When can you leave ? ”

“ Instantly. May I take Munzer’s wife with me, if she is willing to accompany me ? ”

“ Yes ! ” said Cajus, after thinking a while. “ They will fear two women less than one. Farewell ! ”

He threw the bag he had laid down at the door, again over his shoulder and went out. A few moments later, Antonia saw him walk up the street with slow, clumsy step. She made the preparations for her departure quietly, composedly, as if all were as it ought to be. Her heart was as silent as a desert in which a venomous Simoon has killed every vestige of life. She was not even distinctly conscious of her thirst after vengeance as a separate feeling; her whole being was so completely absorbed in it, that she breathed vengeance as she breathed air, and resolved it with every pulsation of her heart.



CHAPTER XX.

ONE evening, in the beginning of September—perhaps two months after the last events—Aunt Bella and Ottilia were sitting in the front-room of the house in River street; Aunt Bella in the sofa corner, Ottilia before her at a large table, on which the lamp was so placed as to give both ladies as much light as possible. But their work—a large rug on which a gigantic, blackish-brown boar was surrounded by a pack of light-brown and yellow dogs with wide-open red mouths; while a huntsman in dark green, as yet without head or arms, was standing ready to thrust a spear, not yet begun, into his shaggy breast—their work, though almost finished, lay idle on their lap, and it did not look as if much would be done this evening to complete it. Aunt Bella had pushed her spectacles up on her forehead, and looked over the table at Ottilia, who stared before her so thoughtfully that the green huntsman, who rested on her lap, evidently owed it to his headless condition alone if his heart did not beat high in his worsted bosom. Aunt Bella shook her head gently, sighed low, dropped her glasses again on her nose, sewed a few stitches, looked once more at Ottilia, took off her spectacles with an energetic effort, threw them into her work-basket, and said angrily:

“No, it won’t do. I am only making one mistake after another.”

"What is the matter, dear aunt?" asked Ottilia, starting up from her dream almost frightened.

"Yes, what is the matter? That's all!" replied Bella. "I have asked you that question three times to-night, and you have not answered it once."

"Oh! don't be angry, dear aunty; my heart is so heavy!" said Ottilia, and as she said it her beautiful blue eyes filled with tears. She raised them imploringly to her aunt.

"I am not angry!" growled Aunt Bella, instantly pacified by this sight. "I thought you at least might know that I cannot be angry with you, or do you also fall in now with certain other people, who say I have no heart? I have a heart, but I don't carry it in my apron, and Holm might know that by this time."

"Holm did not mean any harm; he was very much excited!"

"Harm or no harm, he ought not to have spoken so to an old friend—I mean a friend whom he has known so long. And as to his excitement, we are all excited, God knows! I no less than other people; but that does not keep me from using my five senses, and from knowing that right is still right, and wrong is wrong, in spite of all your fantastic fiddlesticks. And if you were to tear me to pieces and to pinch me with red-hot pincers, I cannot say otherwise than that Munzer has deserved his fate. A man who can leave his wife and his children, and ruin them into the bargain, does not deserve that the sun should shine upon him; and if he gets to-morrow a few years' imprisonment, in addition to his imprisonment for life, I shall be glad—well, no! I shall not be glad, but it will be perfectly right. Political martyr! Bad enough that his political notions made him forget his most sacred duties; but look here, Ottilia, I swear to you: if it had happened so for that reason only, I should say nothing. I don't understand politics. I am too stupid for that. But I know perfectly well what is the real reason, the one that you never choose to mention; that I can understand very well; in fact, I understand that a great deal better than any of you. The real reason is, after all, his passion for that woman, that Antonia—whom, by the way, I can't think so very beautiful as you make her out. That passion has simply made him mad; that is why he did not look right or

left, but ran straight into destruction. If ever a man dug a pit for himself to fall in, it was Munzer. And because my eyes are, God be thanked! sharp enough yet to see all that in the right light, you say I have no heart! why, nice people you are!"

Aunt Bella began, in her great excitement, to roll up the rug, looking exceedingly angry.

"Aunty!" said Ottilia, very decidedly, "you mistake the matter. Right must be right always, certainly! But it is not right to treat Munzer, because he has fought bravely for his political convictions, as if he were a common robber. In that respect he did neither more nor less than very many other people, Wolfgang among them; and as for that other thing, that is for Munzer's conscience to settle, hard though he may find it; but the judges have nothing to do with that!"

"Have nothing to do with that!" replied Aunt Bella, with much irritation; "pray don't trouble yourself, I can roll up the rug alone—have nothing to do with it! then a man does not deserve punishment when he sins against his wife and children, as if he were not a Christian man, but the Grand Turk; or the Dey of Tunis! Well, I don't care! It is all right to me! God be thanked! I have no husband and no children! But how you can defend such outrages, you who I hope will be married one of these days—that is utterly beyond me. I should like to know what you would do if you should be in poor Clara's situation? God forbid that it should ever come to pass! But I should just like to know!"

Aunt Bella struck the rolled-up rug with the flat of her hand and leaned back in her sofa-corner, with the air of a person who is persuaded she has finally settled a very difficult question.

"If I were in the situation?"

Ottilia looked thoughtfully down. "If I were in Clara's situation, I hope I should think, and feel, and act, as generously as Clara does, who has a right to condemn Munzer, if she does not condemn him. And does she do it? Has ever a word of blame passed her lips? No, aunty, Clara herself is the best evidence against you. And then, aunty, in this matter the question is not about right and wrong: the question is how to set Munzer free, to save him from a fate

which is worse than death. How can you hesitate for a moment whether you would like to see him free or not? You, who are generally so kind and self-sacrificing, how can you hesitate now? Is it not enough to make us all wonder? And can you blame poor Holm so much, if he in his excitement calls you heartless, a thing which he believes just as little as anybody else?"

Aunt Bella had not expected so energetic an answer to her last question. She had no remedy, therefore, but to break out in tears, and to assert most positively that she was the wretchedest being on earth, and altogether misunderstood and misjudged. "But I won't be a burden to you much longer," she sobbed. "I shall leave a world in which nobody loves me any more; and when I am dead and buried, and the tight coffin and the black earth weigh heavily on me, you will perhaps come to your senses, and see that your poor aunt was not so very bad, after all. Then you will find out that I never thought of myself, but only of you, in all I said and did; and that Munzer, as far as I am concerned, might have been as free as a Condor in the air, if I had not seen that those whom I hold dearest upon earth risk their life for his sake, and may be taken and shot, and imprisoned for life, as far as I know. Oh! it will drive me crazy, these secret confabulations of yours, this eternal conspiring and bribing of jailors, which is strictly prohibited by the laws of the land. I no sooner fall asleep than I start up again, because I fancy I have heard them knock at the door and cry out, In the name of the law, open! My nerves won't stand it any longer; and if Wolfgang comes—my dear, dear Wolfgang, whom I love as the apple of my eye, whom these stupid people have condemned to death, as if one of them was worthy of unloosing the latchet of his shoes—why it is exactly as if Daniel had run of his own accord into the lion's den. I shall die with anxiety whether I choose or not."

Who knows how long Aunt Bella might have continued in this strain, if Ottilia had not suddenly fallen around her neck, sobbing and crying out: "Stop, aunty, stop! I cannot bear to hear you talking thus about Wolfgang!"

Aunt Bella's tears ceased the moment she saw Ottilia's tears flow; to have caused her darling to cry—that was not what she intended. Evidently, she had gone too far.

"Well, well!" she said, trying to soothe her, and stroking the fair curls which trembled on her bosom. "I did not mean any harm. Be quiet, little timid hare; he won't be mad enough to come here, where so many people know him, and where he could not remain twenty-four hours without being recognized."

The curls suddenly ceased to tremble, and the sweet, blushing face which they surrounded, rose up to her Aunt Bella.

"Yes, aunt!" she said, with much determination; "he is coming."

"Nonsense!" replied Aunt Bella.

"As sure as I——"

"Well, what?" said Aunt Bella, as Ottilia suddenly paused and blushed.

Ottilia did not complete her sentence, but began gathering up all her little sewing material.

"Of course," said Aunt Bella, "if people go so far that they cannot talk of certain things to their only surviving aunt, they prefer being silent and packing up their things, as if that made the heart lighter. If people cannot talk to me of Wolfgang, I should like to know to whom they can do so. Who loves the boy as dearly as I do? Who has given him as many cakes and apples as I have? Who has shed as many tears of joy as I did, when he grew taller and finer-looking with every year, and was always the first at school, and at gymnastics, and at skating, and yet remained all the time as good and sweet as when he was a little bit of a boy? And who has suffered as much as I have, amid all the misfortunes that have befallen him after all, as if there was no more justice in heaven? No, no, my dear Ottilia, Wolfgang has no better friend than I am."

"That I know, aunty dear!" said Ottilia, smiling amid her tears.

"Well, why won't you tell me, then, why you expect him so positively?" asked Aunt Bella, quickly.

"I have a presentiment, aunty."

"Ah! You have a presentiment! Well, then, you ought not always to be laughing at my presentiments. To be sure, Peter says so too, but has there ever been folly like that? I thank God every evening that the boy is safely far away, has

found such a friend in Major Degenfeld's brother, who must be a charming man—and now the girl has a presentiment ! Tell me, girl—will you tell me the truth or not ? Will you tell me whether you love Wolfgang or not ? ”

Aunt Bella had asked Ottilia the same question more than once during the last months, and had each time been very much out of humor for twenty-four hours when Ottilia “ still had no confidence in her aunt,” and gave an evasive answer, or no answer at all. And Aunt Bella would have liked to know so much ! These “ two children ” were her favorites, and engaged all her thoughts, and hopes, and wishes. To see the two united, had been her silent prayer from the day on which Ottilia came to Cologne. She had given up the hope of seeing it ever fulfilled when Wolfgang became engaged to Camilla ; but now when Wolfgang, once more free, was living with Mr. Degenfeld, the major's twin-brother, by whom he had been received not as a stranger but as an old friend, and might, if report could be relied upon, consider himself as the probable heir to a very large fortune—now Aunt Bella looked once more upon her wishes as approaching fulfilment. She had, in her quiet, sleepless hours at night, painted to herself the whole story as it might come to pass, or, in her words, as it ought to come to pass—Wolfgang in a pleasant position, respected and well-to-do, owner of an estate or of a factory, or some such thing—the boy was fit for anything—in a paradisaic region, which Aunt Bella had repeatedly seen very distinctly in her dreams—married to Ottilia ! Aunt Bella herself paying “ her children ” a visit of a few months, especially during the summer, if all arrangements were convenient ; perhaps also in winter, though less willingly ; dividing her time between the house in River street and the beautiful villa in the well-known paradisaic region ! Then, when she should be too feeble to travel, settling down quietly, either at the old house or at the villa—Aunt Bella never could decide in her mind which she would prefer, often as she had proposed the question to herself—but at all events in one of the two houses, cheerfully watched and waited on by people who loved her, and who would therefore readily overlook any little weaknesses which might possibly occur in the course of years ; and not, like the poor old women in the Hospital of St. Ursula, laughed at and

mocked by the boys in the street ! Such had been the picture of the future for herself and her "children," which Aunt Bella's busy imagination had filled up in all details. And now she was not to be allowed to find out, at least not to find out quite positively, whether this strange, reserved girl, Ottilia, really loved poor Wolfgang ! It was too bad, in all conscience ! Aunt Bella ought to let the little one feel that everything in this world has an end, even the patience of a good old aunt. She rose, therefore, from her sofa, declaring that she was going to bed, for the sole purpose of being able to answer Ottilia's usual question, "Can I do anything for you, aunty ?" with a cold and haughty, "Thanks, I can go to bed alone !" But, oh wonder ! Ottilia did not ask her usual question, but said, while Aunt Bella was lighting her candle, "Good-night, aunty, I hope you will sleep well !" Aunt Bella did not believe her own ears. Was such obstinacy possible ? Could anybody be so blind ? Well ! She was used to seeing her best intentions misinterpreted ; she could, if needs be, put on her night things without assistance (although she always had difficulty in slipping on the right sleeve) ; and Aunt Bella rushed out of the room, after having cast a glance at Ottilia, in which she tried to gather up all her grief, her pride, and her resignation.

Ottilia had remained sitting at the table, her head resting on her hand, and was not thinking in the least of Aunt Bella's great grief, but only of the very peculiar tone in which Uncle Peter had said to her, as he left the house with Doctor Holm : "Try to get your aunt to bed early, and keep awake yourself ; send Salome also to bed ; we shall probably return late, and perhaps we will bring somebody with us, for whose sake you can afford sitting up an hour longer."

Who could this mysterious somebody be ? Uncle Peter had repeatedly hinted at it, that Wolfgang might perhaps come, in order to take the direction of the measures for Doctor Munzer's liberation. If he had not spoken more clearly, it was probably on Aunt Bella's account, who always broke out into a flood of tears whenever Wolfgang's name was mentioned in connection with this "horrid conspiracy." Or did Uncle Peter mistrust Ottilia also ? Did he think she would not like to see Wolfgang again, because the meeting might

be fraught with danger for him? But she did not know her uncle as well as she ought to have done. He would not have shrunk from any danger for the sake of rendering Munzer such a service; nor would Doctor Holm. And could she be as proud of Wolfgang as she was, if he had hesitated for a moment? It is true, the others did not risk their lives, but Wolfgang had been condemned to death *in contumaciam*, and would no doubt be shot if he should be caught. Uncle Peter himself had said so more than once, and Doctor Holm had added that it was well known how certain circles were still divided between their satisfaction at Degenfeld's death and their anger at Wolfgang's escape.

Ottilia's heart began to beat quickly as she reflected on all this during the quiet night-hour. It was, after all, well considered a fearful venture; and although Wolfgang, as a matter of course, possessed more courage, presence of mind, and cleverness than all the others, still it was quite as certain that he would claim the most difficult and most dangerous part of the business as his own; and how easily could a letter be interrupted or a password be betrayed; how easily could somebody recognize him, and then the worst was to be expected!

The young girl rose from her chair. Whether it was the close air in the room, the stillness of night, or a presentiment of something great and fearful that was to decide her whole future life—her bosom was oppressed; she would have liked to cry, and yet she would also have liked to be active, and to prepare the path for Wolfgang. Ah! how carefully she would watch! She would overlook no precaution—for Uncle Peter and Doctor Holm could not possibly think of everything! Why had not uncle told her all? Was it not cruel in him to leave her here alone with this uncertainty, this anxiety? And was not there somebody coming up the street with rapid strides, pausing now, right before the house? Was not the key put into the lock? Nobody except uncle and Doctor Holm had a key to the front-door! And now a light, quick step came up the stairs! Her blood ceased to flow to her heart; she dared not stir or breathe—her eyes fixed upon the door, equally unable to flee, and to go to meet the new-comer. She was standing there, the loveliest picture of joyful terror. A hand, which easily found the door-knob,

opened the door ; a tall, slender figure stood on the threshold—and then came up to her with open arms. She saw Wolfgang's face as in a dream ; she flew towards him and lay on his bosom. Not a word had been spoken ; why should they tell each other that this was the moment for which they had longed and yearned, oh how long ! and which they had yet known must come sooner or later ! And now it was there—the blissful, blissful moment !

Ottilia recovered herself first. She withdrew from his arms, went to the window, let down the curtains, listened at the door which led into the inner apartments, and then came back to Wolfgang, to take him by the hand and to lead him on tiptoe to the darkest corner of the room, where, close by the old cuckoo clock, the "little sofa" stood, a children's sofa, dating from the better days of the Schmitz family. There she made him sit down by her—very close, or they could not hear each other's whispers ; and now the happiness ! to hold his hands, to be quite sure that he was there ; to look into his sunburnt face, the fine features of which had become so much more manly and energetic ; to hear his voice, as he told her how anxiously he had looked forward to this hour, and how grateful he had been for the ring that had been a talisman to him in all trouble and danger, and how he hoped the ring would protect him now also, when he was endeavoring to snatch a noble victim from the jaws of tyranny.

"Tell me all, Wolfgang," the girl begged him, looking at him beseechingly with her large eyes. "I am stronger than you think ; I can hear it all ; but uncertainty I cannot bear. What do you mean to do ? When is it to be done ? How are you going to do it ?"

"You shall hear it all, darling," replied Wolfgang. "I would have told you long ago if I had been here, and cannot understand why Uncle Peter has kept our plan such a secret from you. Munzer is to be liberated by force, and to-morrow. We know through our spies that he is to be carried to-morrow night, at the close of the trial, very quickly and very quietly, up the river to a distant railway station. They are afraid of letting him be seen at the station here ; they even think the jail might be stormed ! The cowardly fools ! As if we would think of making a street tumult, if the people would

only protect its heroes ! Cajus and Ruchel, who are at Antonia's house, will leave there to-morrow evening at the same time that I and Kettenberg leave here on horseback, so that we can meet half an hour this side of Rheinfeld in a little birch-wood. If fortune favors us—and it will favor us for your sake, darling !—Munzer is free before midnight. You need not apprehend too much danger. The police constables are so completely demoralized by Antonia's gold—she has spent thousands—that the government has not half a dozen on whom they can fully rely ; and if chance should be malignant enough to pick out this half dozen, they cannot possibly resist, utterly unprepared as they are, four men who are resolute and determined.”

“ But how did you win over Kettenberg ? ” asked Ottilia ; “ the report was that he had been jilted by the baroness and was hostile to Munzer.”

“ Admire, then, the ingenuity of this woman and her knowledge of men ! ” replied Wolfgang, laughing. “ When the question arose who was to be the fourth man, as four were required, and Antonia proposed Kettenberg, I laughed outright. But Antonia said, with her dark air, which she now always wears : ‘ I will write to him ; in a week he will be here ! ’ She wrote, and the week was not out when Kettenberg met us in Switzerland. He has espoused our cause for the sake of Antonia's beautiful eyes, with a passion as if Munzer were his own brother, and has become eminently useful to us by his cleverness and adroitness. Besides, he is a capital horseman, perfectly at home with arms as if it were his profession ; and with all his passionate temper, as cool in the moment of danger as Cajus.”

“ And Cajus ? ”

“ Has entered Antonia's service, since Munzer's condemnation, as head-steward, or whatever you choose to call it ; and I can assure you, he did not move a feature when he helped, yesterday, Baron Rudi, *alias* Ruchel, out of his carriage.”

“ And what is to be done next ? ” asked Ottilia.

“ Now comes the hardest part of our undertaking,” continued Wolfgang. “ I mean how to carry Munzer across the frontier. We want our friend Miller for that purpose, the captain of the steam-tug, who aided Munzer and Degen-

feld in their first flight from Rheinfeld. Unfortunately he will not be down for three days, and we have determined to hide Munzer until then in Balthasar's tower. The idea, which by the way is my own, is rather a bold one, but quite practical. There is no safer hiding-place in the world than that tower, to which only Ruchel and myself know the entrance. We are close to the river ; and Churchtown, where the steamer lands, is only a quarter of an hour distant. Antonia's carriage can bring us there in seven minutes. And then we shall gain this by it, that they will look for Munzer all along the frontier, while he quietly hides in the Witches' Tower, so that we can wait there, if needs be, for a better opportunity."

"And is Clara Munzer informed of your plan?"

"She knows that we are determined to set Munzer free, but she does not yet know the details of the plan ; for we have agreed upon them but just now at Doctor Brand's house, where Uncle Peter, Doctor Holm, and the others, are still assembled. I am in favor of telling her everything. What do you think?"

"No doubt! I know from my own experience how trying this uncertainty is! What does the baroness say to it?"

"I believe she will agree with us. She always speaks in terms of the highest admiration of Clara Munzer. And now I must go, darling!"

"But, Wolfgang, what will Aunt Bella say if she hears that you have been in the house without having seen her? Or are you going to stay with us? Ah yes! You must stay with us! Do!"

And she laid both her hands on his shoulders, around his neck, as if she could never let him go again.

"I cannot stay with you, darling. Aunt Bella must know nothing of it, at least not till all is over. And now I must return to the others, who are waiting for important news from one of our men and for my return. I had only half an hour's leave of absence."

"Where are you staying? Are you safe, quite safe?"

"As safe as I can be. In old Moss's old garden-house, in company with a delightful rope-ladder, by means of which I can, at the least sign of danger, let myself down the city wall, and within twenty yards reach a horse, which stands

there saddled, day and night, in an old barn belonging to Moss. The old man always was a stern republican, but he is sterner than ever since my mother's death. According to him, all the misfortunes of the world are due to the aristocrats, especially to the Hohenstein family, whom he looks upon as the essence of all that is hateful.

"He loves me because I am my mother's son. He has married our old Ursula in all haste, merely in order to have somebody to whom he can talk of my mother! And now farewell, my darling, I must not stay any longer."

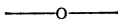
"I will go down with you!" said Ottilia.

She took the lamp and went in front of him, shading the light with her hand, along the gallery, down the stairs, till they reached the lower hall. She put the lamp on the lowest step, and led Wolfgang through the hall to the front-door. They held each other closely embraced. "Wolfgang, I do not ask you when I shall see you again; but I shall die if I do not see you."

"And I, darling, shall not die, but live—live with you, my life!"

He drew the weeping girl once more to his heart, kissed her hair, her eyes, her lips, and tore himself away. Ottilia hastened back upstairs to the bay-window, to see, if possible, the beloved one once more. But the night was too dark; she only heard his hurried steps as they gradually receded down the silent street.

She listened till the last sound had passed away. Then she went very cautiously to her chamber; and when she had put out her light, she folded her hands as she used to do as a child, and prayed in a low, low whisper: "Oh, let me live—live with him, my life!"



CHAPTER XXI.

THE monster trial of the participants in the Rheinfeld *émeute* was to be concluded to-day: a hundred witnesses for the government, eighty for the defence. The city had been in a state of feverish excitement for a

week. The building in which the jury was sitting had for eight days been surrounded every morning by a crowd of people, of whom only the smallest part could gain admittance ; for eight days they had been sitting and standing in the court-room, following the trial with increasing eagerness. The habitués pointed out, with a certain pride, the most important actors in this interesting drama to strangers or such unlucky persons as had not been able to obtain tickets before the sixth or seventh day. "The tall, dark man on the bench of the accused, who rests his pale face on his hands, is Doctor Munzer. The gentleman on the second bench, who is just now wiping his head with his handkerchief, is Doctor Holm ; the little man with the steel-gray hair, by his side, is Peter Schmitz. And do you see the lady before them on the front seat ?—the pale one, who looks so fixedly at Munzer ? That is his wife. They have never once during the whole time allowed her to see her husband ; now she has met him for the first time. When she comes in, they all make room for her, and take off their hats as if she were a queen. You see ? Now Doctor Munzer looks at her, and she smiles in return. They say that Munzer has not been faithful to her ; he loved a Baroness Hohenstein. But that is another lie, such as these aristocrats cut out of the whole cloth to injure us poor people. I have known the baroness a long time ; I have worked for her, and ought to know, I am sure. The baroness is not here to-day ; the other days she always used to sit behind that pillar there. She always had a black veil before her face. Now the doctor rises. Now you'll see how he talks ; you never heard the like of it, I am sure, in all your life ! "

There was much rustling and moving, much whispering and low murmuring in the hall, and then deep, breathless silence. Munzer had risen, when the president had allowed him to speak. His fine face was very pale, and sharp eyes saw that his dark, full hair had turned gray here and there. But that might be the effect of the evening light, which fell gray and cold through the window opposite to him into the room. All noticed the deep, scarcely-healed wound, which passed broad and red across his forehead from the corner of the eye up to the hair. However much the proud strength of the man might be undermined by illness and mental suf-

fering, in his fine dark eyes there shone still the old fire, and his deep rich voice had not lost its music, as he now began to speak: "I am in the peculiar position," he said, "of being able to speak of my own affairs like one who looks from the clouds down upon earthly matters. For, gentlemen of the jury, I have nothing to fear and nothing to hope from your decision. Honored already with lifelong imprisonment for what I have done upon another and a larger stage than this town, you would have first to understand the mystery of being able to add to the number of my days, if you should wish to prolong the sufferings of my prison-life, or you would have to deny me life itself. The former you cannot do; the latter, I apprehend, is inadmissible under existing circumstances. I am, therefore, perfectly free from all passionate excitement, which generally troubles the mind of the accused. I feel as free, standing before you, as you are yourselves. Thus, without hatred, without fear, without anger, and without hope, I may speak the truth, and I mean to do it. Yes, gentlemen, I tell you candidly—and I beg you will not look upon it as an evidence of want of respect, but as the result of three months' unbroken reflection, which may rock even a tempestuous heart to rest—I tell you that I would make no use of this, my last opportunity in life, to speak a free word, but silently disappear again in the night of my dungeon if I were to act for myself only. But I must plead the cause of these men, my companions and friends, who are sitting to-day, for my sake—yes, gentlemen, for my sake—upon the bench of the accused. Slaves of poverty and ignorance, as they are for the most part, not one of them would, as far as I know, have ventured to rise against the oppression and the sorrows of a miserable fate, if I had not approached them, personifying in their eyes their silent grief, their secret wrath, their nameless sufferings. It was I who taught them to spell and to read the fearful word Revolution; it was I who stirred them up and frightened them into deeds, into that one deed for which they are now under trial. I feel it my duty to make this statement here in this solemn hour, which is for me the faint evening twilight before an eternal night, in the face of my friends, in the face of my enemies, in the face of men on whose affections I can count in life and in death. This sense of duty alone has enabled me to

bear with stoic indifference all the sufferings of the body and the soul ; this alone has kept me from dying. And thus I declare and confess before you and before the higher tribunal of history, before which you, gentlemen, and I and these men, are all of us clients together, that half of the guilt, if guilt there must be, falls upon me, the agitator, the ringleader ; but the other half, which is perhaps more than half of the whole, falls—but of that permit me to say more hereafter ; I desire first to form the accusation brought against me by the government more accurately than has been done.

“The public prosecutor has praised at length my intelligence at the expense of my character. If you were to believe him, I should deserve for the one a place among the wisest men of the age ; and as for the other, the burning pool in Rubens’ Last Judgment would not be hot enough for me. The public prosecutor has endeavored to represent me as a man with the heart of a Catiline and the mind of a Plato, a chimera, a logical impossibility, a moral monster. I shall take care, gentleman, not to commit the same error of exaggeration, nor to make an effort to convince you of the contrary. The truth of the matter is, that I am neither as good nor as bad as the public prosecutor would have me appear ; neither as wise, for then I would not be here ; nor as wicked, for then also I would not be here. What I have to pay for, and am ready to pay for, is exactly my want of wisdom, which in politics amounts to a crime. What I have to pay for is my weak heart, which was moved by the pictures of poverty and misery placed daily before my eyes, which was pained and tortured by the hoarse voices of hunger and care that surrounded my very cradle. If I were a selfish theorist I should not have fought for such feelings ; if I had been simply prudent, I should have saved my life by flight long before the day of battle came ; if I had been wise, I should have seen that the mine by means of which I thought to blow up this proud and yet so imperfect edifice of modern society, was far from being long and deep and powerful enough ; and that a handful of good people, who have been made to appreciate their misery, do not suffice to make a German republic. I might say this, gentlemen, if I merely desired to give you, in place of the caricature which the public accuser has exhibited to you, a portrait which bears at least human

features, and has a probability of likeness in its favor. But I meant to say the truth, the whole truth, and nothing but the truth ; and therefore I confess that on the evening on which I gave by my example the signal for the march to Rheinfeld, I no longer believed in the success of that enterprise, or even the partial success of the whole German revolution. I confess that that act was the act of a desperate man, who sees the cause lost for which he has fought during twenty years, and who throws his life with indifference after the cause. Whether I had a right, as husband and as father, to dispose thus of my own life, is a question which only the eye of eternal love can fathom ; whether I was at liberty to do so as a public man, that has probably long ago been decided by those who know neither enthusiasm nor despair ; but what I was not at liberty to do as a man, and as a public man, was to carry these friends and adherents of mine with me over the precipice, and to dispose of their lives and their property as if they had been only shadows of my own body. If I had raised my voice on that night as loud against the proposed *émeute* as some of my friends did, whom I now thank for it in the spirit, all would have happened differently ; and whatever might have been my fate, these men would not be here on trial. That they are here, that is my crime, that is the one-half of the guilt for which I suffer in my conscience more than you or any jury on earth can make me suffer.

“But, gentlemen, mark me well ! This is but one-half of the guilt ; the other half, I charge not to your account—for I do not know you, and do not wish to know you—but to the account of all the indifferent, the lukewarm, the divided minds who cannot say yes or no, or rather who say yes and no in the same breath ; to the account of those who forget their duty, who are not to be found in the hour of danger, who do not or cannot understand that in times of great political excitement, everybody must choose his party, if the demon revolution is not to become a horror. I charge it to the account of the wealthy citizen who sells liberty for thirty pieces of silver, of the timid scholar who asserts with timid, self-pleased smile that his study is his world, of the exhausted fop who laughs at all enthusiasm, of the cowardly office-holder who swallows every wrong for the sake of his

"daily bread," of the whole herd of weaklings of every class and every age, who, incapable of any manly act, want peace at all hazards, and at any cost, even at the price of disgraceful humiliation. They, the drones in the commonwealth, who ever hang around tyranny and help to increase its oppressive weight, have done more harm by their inactivity, than any one of the poor men who has boldly seized a gun or a paving-stone in behalf of his political convictions, however absurd they may have been. They are the evil mildew which has as yet blasted the efforts of every spring in which our poor, ill-treated nation promised to bloom forth to new vigor and new life. They are to be blamed if the young day of freedom has ever promptly changed again into the old dark night. And if this night is not quite as dark now as it has been, to whom is this due, if not to these political criminals, these murderous republicans, these raging madmen, who have at least the pluck to fire a gun, and to be fired at? Yes, gentlemen, in this sense I do not hesitate to call my action, which in another sense appears even to me a crime, a praiseworthy deed. These poor men here, whom I have cheated out of the happiness of a quiet existence, may curse me; but you, you owe me a crown of laurel. If you are still able to lift up your heads as you do, it is surely not your merit, but the merit of the immortal rabble, whom tyranny respects more than it admits, of whom it shoots down in open battle, behind the barricade, or on the glacis of a fortress, as many as it can, but to whom it also makes concessions which benefit you alone. But do not rely too much on these hard hands, which must do laborers' work for the modicum of liberty which you enjoy in comfort while they are exposed to every hardship outside! Think in time of enlarging the building, so that all can find room within! Otherwise you might one of these days be aroused at a very inconvenient hour! Remember that social revolution is like the Roman Sibyl, who was rudely and scornfully refused again and again, and yet came back again and again, but each time offering less for a higher price! Hear the voice of a man who has spent all the powers of his mind and his heart in reading this dark, difficult book: Pay the price before it is too late! Take that hard hand before it crushes you! Make your peace with the masses, that blind Samson,

before he does what otherwise he cannot help, and tears down the mighty pillar, and buries you and himself alike under the ruins! If I could hope that this warning would find an echo somewhere within the walls of this building, if I could think that the genius of our nation, in his efforts to solve great political and social questions, has used us for an experiment which destroys us, but which brings the solution to coming generations, then I would willingly disappear from the arena without glory and without thanks, and console myself, come what may, with the knowledge that the stone rejected by the builders will yet become the cornerstone! And may this thought comfort, also, you who love me! On that glorious morning when the banners that are now trailing in the dust shall wave from every roof and battlement, and when the golden light of the sun shall shine upon a free nation, may you then remember me without sorrow, may you then grant me the satisfaction of saying: he erred grievously and sinned deeply in life, but he died for his ideal—for a German social republic!"

The immense crowd which filled the court-room up to the remotest corners, had listened to Munzer's words in breathless silence. Now, as he sank back on his bench, pale and exhausted, a storm of applause broke loose, as if the walls were to come down on their heads. There were no cheers—it was a noise like rattling thunder, or the roaring of a mighty cataract. Women were seen melting in tears, men were seen grinding their teeth, and savagely brandishing their closed fists.

The president's parchment face looked yellower than ever; in his terror he cast imploring looks at Munzer. The latter rose, stepped forward to the bar, and raised his hands, commanding silence. And suddenly as this madness had broken out, it subsided again, and once more breathless silence reigned in the hall.

The president thought it best to improve the moment; he declared with trembling voice that such interruptions could not be tolerated, and that the room must be cleared.

It was evident that it would have required but a nod or a sign from Munzer, and these hundreds of men, whose blood was heated to madness, would have risen like a swollen stream, would have rushed behind the bar, crushing,

trampling under foot, and killing instantly the judge, the jury, the court officials—all! But Munzer gave no sign. His words: For my sake! For the love of me! fell like oil upon the troubled waters.

All rose, solemnly, as when a priest invokes a blessing from on high. They saw how Peter Schmitz went up to Clara Munzer and offered her his arm to escort her out of the room. Doctor Holm followed. In the fearful crush a lane opened as if by magic. Weeping eyes, painfully rigid, reverential faces! Behind them the crowd surged up again, and slowly the stream rolled down through the wide-open folding-doors, along the passages, upon the open square before the Court House, where it was swallowed up by thousands, who were waiting for the verdict.

And all these thousands bared their heads as Clara, accompanied by Peter Schmitz and Holm, came down the steps and entered a carriage, in which the two gentlemen also took seats.

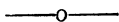
But little was wanting to make the people take out the horses, and themselves carry triumphantly to her home the wife of the man in whom they now saw a martyr of liberty.

The excitement spread from the square all over the city. Everywhere groups were seen forming, in which the last news from the Court House was discussed. The trial did not end till six o'clock. Munzer and perhaps half of the accused were sentenced to imprisonment for a longer or shorter term. Munzer, it was said, had been taken back to his prison through a secret passage. It was long after midnight before the crowd entirely left the square in front of the Court House.

But the next day brought even more startling news. First as an unauthenticated report; then more reliable accounts came in, and at last it was known as a certainty that the carriage in which Munzer was to have been carried away at night, had been stopped near Rheinfeld by a crowd of masked, heavily-armed horsemen, who had disarmed the escort, in spite of their desperate defence, and escaped with Munzer. Men who had never seen each other in their lives, told each other the story in the streets. Have they any suspicion? Suspicion in abundance, but nothing on which they can act. Half the city is in the plot. Do you know

already? Of course. Also that the police has searched Peter Schmitz's house, and the Baroness Hohenstein's house? They can hardly have found much. God forbid! But must they not have been fine fellows? Well, I should think so. I wish I had been near! And where do you think, eh? The French frontier is not far off. And I dare say they have first-rate passports! Ha, ha, ha!

In the meantime the telegraph was hard at work, and mounted messengers flew in all directions. The marvellous boldness with which the whole had been executed, had inflamed the anger of the authorities, and spurred them on to the most energetic activity; but two, three days passed, and as yet not the slightest trace had been found of the abducted man or of the attacking party.



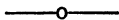
CHAPTER XXII.

MUNZER'S escape created an immense sensation, not only amongst the classes with whom he had come most in contact through his political activity, but also in other circles of the great city, and perhaps the greatest in the highest circles. His relations to the Baroness Hohenstein had for a time been a favorite topic of conversation; the "picturesque Intermezzo," as Wyse had called Antonia's little affair with Kettenberg, had been heartily laughed at; it was so exactly in Antonia's line. While the two were believed to be in Italy together, letters had suddenly arrived from officers in the field, which brought marvellous, almost incredible news, so that many at first thought it was a pre-concerted hoax, till the officers themselves came back, one by one, and brought the strange story home with all its details. Unlucky Todwitz was the hero of the day, because he had seen Antonia, with his own eyes, holding the head of the wounded man in her lap, at the edge of the forest, and during the hottest of the fight. Wherever he appeared, they cried, especially the ladies: "Ah! there he is! Dear Baron Todwitz, is it really all true? Please, please, tell us the

whole romantic story!" Colonel Hohenstein, also, who had been the second on the spot, was at first overwhelmed with questions; but he repelled the curiosity even of very great ladies, the Countess Hinkel and others, with such cold and harsh haughtiness, that no one ventured to approach him again on the subject. Great heavens! It was, after all, quite natural that he should wish the affair to be forgotten, and to spare as much as he could the reputation of his unfortunate sister-in-law, little as there was to be saved. On the whole, they thought his conduct very noble, although such generosity was rather new in the colonel, who had of late spoken very harshly of Antonia. However, there were many features in this whole affair quite incomprehensible, and especially Antonia's own demeanor. Without even denying her sympathy with Munzer, she still did nothing to give it form or shape. She made no effort to gain admission to the prisoner; to the great surprise of everybody, she did not even sign a petition in which a large number of persons, from all ranks of society in Cologne, implored the monarch to pardon Munzer. On the other hand, she resumed her place in society, as if nothing had happened to make her shun the world. Some admired her courage, others called her a heartless coquette, while still others declared her to be the most perfect actress in the world. She did not seem to mind what people said or thought. She charmed everybody, as heretofore, by her beauty and her wit; and after she had given several brilliant entertainments at her town-house, there was not a lady, from Countess Hinkel down to the poorest of noble old maids, who would have denied herself to Baroness Hohenstein. "She is a little eccentric; that is all. The Hohensteins always had the privilege of furnishing subject for gossip."

And the Hohensteins had certainly of late made the very amplest use of this unenviable privilege. The general's imprisonment and trial, the alderman's terrible end, Wolfgang's escape and treasonable participation in the revolution, and now the countless stories which began to circulate about matters in the president's official mansion. Fearful scenes were reported to have taken place between Camilla and her betrothed, Privy Councillor von Sneider. Willamowski's heavenly bliss also was said to have received rude

shocks since the painter Kettenberg had returned from Italy, or wherever else he had hidden himself, as reckless and mad and as irresistible as ever. Like Antonia Hohenstein he had resumed his old place as *maître de plaisirs* in the highest circles of Cologne society, as if nothing at all had happened. It was even reported, here and there, that both engagements, that of Camilla with Snepper, and that of Aurelia with Willamowski, had been broken off again. This rumor, however, had as yet received no confirmation ; on the contrary, the invitations had all been sent out. The two weddings were to be held at the same time at Rheinfeld. They related almost incredible things as to the brilliant preparations for the double solemnity at the château : a dinner for two hundred guests, *grand bal* at night, and magnificent illumination of the whole park—and that all that should not take place now, after the cards had been received more than a week ago, was simply impossible ! It was almost equally impossible that Munzer should not be caught again. At the mess-table of the ninety-ninth regiment these two great questions of the day were of course thoroughly discussed ; and the countless wagers offered by crowing voices and accepted by other crowing voices, gave evidence of the zeal of the parties. Nor was it quite settled yet whether Antonia Hohenstein would appear on that occasion. Everybody knew that immediately after Munzer's escape had become known, her home in town, as well as her villa in the country, had been searched by the police, and that even her château on one of her estates had not escaped. The search had been fruitless, as far as immediate results were concerned, but it had shown that the authorities had their own opinion of the secret activity of the beautiful lady. It was, however, so entirely in keeping with Antonia's character, first to commit herself and then to defy public opinion, that those who betted she would appear at the ball seemed to have a better chance than their opponents.



CHAPTER XXIII.

IT was the forenoon of the double celebration. A marvellously beautiful autumn day poured out its full splendor over the rich and varied landscape. In the park garlands were hung and triumphal arches were erected by skillful workmen from the city, under Kettenberg's personal superintendence. Lanterns of colored paper were strung on lines to stretch from tree to tree ; and on an open space on the other side of the lake, just opposite the château, a renowned pyrotechnist was making preparations for a grand display. In the château itself there was incessant running upstairs and downstairs. Although they had been at work there for a whole week, hardly stopping at night even, there was still much to be done. Just now news had been brought that Prince Loben-Reizenstein, who had provisionally assumed the chief command of all the troops in the province, would honor the feast with his presence. He had requested, to be sure, that this should not be made the cause for any change in the programme, but "great heavens," said the president's wife, "we know very well what that means from such great personages. Some little allusion, their cypher in brilliant characters over a triumphal arch at the fireworks, a special reception, something of the kind they like, after all. At all events, child, it must not be known that he comes only for your sake."

Camilla smiled. "For my sake? Why should he come for my sake?"

"You are not going to play comedy with your own mother, you little scamp," said the tender mother, caressing almost with an air of reverence the magnificent brown hair of the daughter she worshipped. "Do I deserve it that you should keep your secrets from me? Do you think I did not see the prince's stolen glances at you the very first evening on which he saw you at our house? No, my pet, such things do not escape me. I delight in your triumphs!" and she embraced her favorite child most cordially.

"But he told me himself that he was soon to be married," said Camilla, disengaging herself from her mother's embrace.

"Great heavens! Don't you know how that is with such great personages? They have to marry for state reasons, but they have a heart, nevertheless, and who will blame them, if they give it to the most beautiful? Ah, child, I cannot tell you what I feel at the mere thought. His principality is a small one, it is true, but your father says his influence at our court is immense. Just think: commander-in-chief at his age! But influence is the thing, after all. If you have power over the powerful, you can see them all on their knees at your feet."

"And Snepper!"

The mother shrugged her shoulders. "He will have to submit to his fate; he might have foreseen that a better man might come, when he first presumed to covet your hand. If he does not resign at once, so much the worse for him."

"Do you think we can so easily get rid of him again?"

"Fair and clever women always get the better of men, my child."

"But he has been talking to me already, mamma ——"

"Pshaw! of course, he is jealous! That will soon be over. The question is only whether his jealousy is greater than his ambition. And besides, how could he enforce his claims on you? Why, it is ridiculous!"

"I hate him."

"Do you think I love him? We will master him yet, I promise you."

"It is a pity, after all, we could not keep Wolfgang," said the young lady meditatively.

"Child, what are you dreaming of?" cried the mother. "I do not recognize my own child in you! How can you waste a thought on such a vagabond, a good-for-nothing? Don't you know he is strongly suspected of having helped Munzer to escape? The man has become a regular footpad; but then he is his father's son! Now I must go and look after Aurelia. I dare say she has nothing ready yet; there is no saying how much anxiety that girl gives me!"

In the meantime Miss Aurelia, still in her *négligé*, had gone down into the park to bring Kettenberg herself the news of the prince's expected arrival, instead of sending a servant to him, as her mother had asked her to do. She had seen

Kettenberg during the three days he had spent at Rheinfeld only in passing, and she rather liked to have an opportunity of talking with him once more freely before her wedding. Kettenberg was standing in his shirt-sleeves on a ladder, drawing with a piece of chalk a cypher on a triumphant arch, which was afterwards to be filled up with colored lamps, when Aurelia came up.

"Well, you are just in time," exclaimed the painter; "five minutes more and your own sweet name would have blazed forth here. Any other commands?"

"Mamma would like the pyrotechnist to provide something special for the prince!"

"I'll speak to the noble artist. Anything else?"

"No!"

Miss Aurelia did not seem to be pressed for time. Instead of returning to the château, she sat down on a couple of poles to be used as flagstaffs, and watched Kettenberg, as he added ornament to ornament, and finally drew a gigantic crown on top with a few bold strokes.

"There," said Kettenberg, "that'll do!" He came down from his ladder, put on his coat, and looked up at his drawing.

"Not so bad, Miss Aurelia! Don't you think so?"

"Admirable!" replied Aurelia.

"But you did not even look!"

"My opinion can be nothing to you now!"

"Are we a little sentimental to-day?"

"That would be Love's Labor Lost with you!"

"Ah indeed? Well, you are right. But why do you say it in such a tragic tone?"

"Because you are faithless! you are a traitor!"

"That's divine! I thought it was you who was going to be married to-day!"

"And why am I?"

"Ah, if you don't know, I don't!"

"You know perfectly well."

"'Pon honor!"

"Don't tell a fib!"

"Aurelia!"

"Did you not paint Antonia's portrait in life-size?"

"I have painted yours also life-size, and twice!"

"But you did not go to Italy with me."

"You were engaged to the baron."

"Nevertheless! I knew you would run away with her."

"Well, if that is not too good! You knew I would run away with her? Did you know, too, that my *liaison dangereuse* would last exactly two hours?"

"Don't you love her still?"

"Upon my word and honor—no!"

"But you have been at her house almost every day."

"I have been here three days in succession, and have been working like a slave to make your wedding as brilliant as I can."

"Bad enough, that you are not ashamed to work for my wedding."

"You are mad, Aurelia."

"I did not deserve that!"

During this discussion they had entered an avenue in which they could no longer be seen from the place where the laborers were at work. Aurelia threw herself on a bench and began to sob and to cry in her passionate manner.

"But, Aurelia!"

"Leave me!"

"Great God! I——"

"Be silent! I hate you. I won't hear another word from you."

The young lady started up again, and walked rapidly farther up the avenue. Kettenberg followed her, trying in vain to stop her tears. Thus they got farther and farther into the park, and at last they came to a place where tall, untrimmed hedges of evergreens surrounded a circular stone-basin, which had long ceased to hold water, while old, weather-beaten statues of sandstone looked with Farm-like smiles down upon mossy banks, that were crumbling to pieces.

"Leave me alone!" said Aurelia, stamping her foot.

"In this state of excitement? No!" said Kettenberg. "Aurelia, dearest girl! we have often enough told each other that you would have to marry somebody else, sooner or later. We have often enough laughed at it, and joked about it; and now, when the inevitable thing has come to pass, you want to hate me! Pray, dearest, tell me that you

will not hate me ; because, poor fellow, I am nothing but a poor painter?"

There was a world of feeling in the tone in which the reckless young man uttered these words. His face, always very pale, had become still paler ; his eyes burnt with an unnatural fire. Aurelia compared in her mind this marvelously gifted man, who had always appeared to her incomparably handsome, with the elegant, good-natured, weak-minded dandy whom she was to call her husband in a few hours, and threw herself weeping and sobbing on Kettenberg's bosom.

"Aurelia ! darling !" whispered Kettenberg, tenderly. "I am yours, forever yours, if you will be mine !"

"Yours forever ! forever !" sobbed Aurelia.

The château, splendidly illuminated, was as full and as busy as a beehive. From the tall, open windows of the great ball-room, the music of waltzes and polkas was heard ; the park was full of country people, who had come to stare at the illumination long after the great people had become tired of it ; the countless lamps of gay colors which were hanging in bold garlands from tree to tree ; the enormous arches with their bright inscriptions, and huge banners floating lazily in the evening breeze ; and whenever the pyrotechnist sent off another bunch of rockets, there was no end of joyous Ah's and Oh's. In the court-yard fiery horses champed the bit and pawed the ground ; among the superb carriages that of the great prince excited special admiration ; they had never seen such a high coachman's box, nor servants in such absolutely gorgeous liveries. When the flames in the huge candelabra before the front-door blazed up brighter than usually, it looked as if the whole court-yard was in a blaze.

The old general, who had been present during the whole feast, in spite of his infirmity, which excited universal sympathy, had asked the prince's permission to withdraw to his rooms for the rest of the evening. His highness had insisted upon taking the "venerable veteran's" arm, and accompanying him to the door of the ball-room, where the two had parted, after the prince had once more assured his host of his own high regard, and of the special favor of the mon-

arch, which he had been directed to convey to the general. The latter had then tottered, leaning on his valet, down the staircase, through the long passage, to his bed-room ; he had laid aside his uniform and put on his velvet dressing-gown, exchanged the loose boots for still easier fur slippers, and was now sitting, completely exhausted, in his arm-chair before the fire-place, in which a bright fire was burning in spite of the warm evening.

The last year had changed the general from an old man, who was still stately in spite of his excessive leanness, into a mummy. His eagle face looked like a death's head. His hands bore the shape of bird's claws, and he himself was but a shadow of the old tyrant who only a short year ago still used to beat his servants, or to throw whatever fell into his hands at their heads. But there were still flashes of lightning in his black eyes ; not the old Berserker rage, but the malignant wickedness of an evil soul, which is fully conscious of its inability to inflict harm, and yet would like to annihilate with a look the enemy it can no longer tear to pieces with the hands.

The old man sat there, nodding and blinking with his eyes, and neighing a strange kind of laugh, and nodding again half asleep, when he suddenly called to his valet, who was busy at the bed in another part of the room, saying to him with repulsive friendliness :

"Jean, dear Jean !"

The man came and placed himself on the left side of the arm-chair, for the old gentleman had now for some time been unable to turn his head to the right.

"Yes, your excellency."

"How much did you say the president gives you for reporting to him faithfully everything that happens at the château here ?"

"I have told your excellency I don't know how often," said Jean, very roughly—the same man who had once been in Antonia's service, and whom the president had strongly recommended to the old general.

"Tell me again, dear Jean !"

"Fifty dollars !"

"Very good. And how much do you get from Dr. Snep-per for telling him everything that happens here ?"

"Fifty dollars!"

"Very good. And how much do I give you to tell them nothing but lies?"

"A hundred dollars!"

"And for that you tell us lies all around; very good, very good," and the mummy neighed and coughed and blinked his red eyelids and nodded; then he said:

"Jean, dear Jean!"

"I am here!"

"Ah, Jean, where is the lawyer who has written the marriage contracts for the young people?"

"He is writing upstairs."

"Do you know what he is writing, Jean?"

"What is that to me?"

"He makes a new will for me, Jean; you are mentioned in it, Jean; you are to have five hundred dollars if you treat me well till I die."

"I don't believe it."

"You shall read it; you shall sign your name to it."

There was a strange stir in the gray face of the valet with the fox eyes; he cast a restless glance at the windows, through which the night looked black into the room, and then he looked at the mummy which was nodding and blinking before him. Then he looked at the clock on the mantelpiece, which pointed at half-past ten. His restlessness seemed to increase; he paced the room; there had been a knock at the door twice, and the old general had cried, Jean, Jean! before he went and opened.

It was the priest Ambrosius, who came, in his quick way, close up to the general, struck the ground with his heavy cane, and said in a rough voice, "Here I am!"

"Ah!" said the mummy, raising the head slightly by a great effort, "it is dear Mr. Ambrosius. Leave us, Jean, and when I ring go up to the lawyer and tell him to come down. He'll be ready by that time."

Jean left the room with a savage glance at the priest Ambrosius, who drew a chair to the old man's side near the fire, and said:

"What do you want of me to-day? And why do you always send at such inconvenient hours? If I had not just come home from a dying man in the village, the devil

might have come to see you, but not I. What do you want?"

Ambrosius rubbed his hands before the fire and continued angrily:

"I have not much time. My poor niece is in a terrible state of excitement since Munzer has escaped. I do not like to be away from home longer than is necessary. What is it?"

"Dear Ambrosius," said the old man, "I want to become a Catholic."

Ambrosius jumped up from his chair.

"The devil!" he said; "are we to have the old story over again? Look here, sir, I am tired of your tomfoolery. I tell you once more, and for the last time, that I do not want to hear any more such nonsense. Whenever your bad conscience awakes, you want to turn Catholic. When you were in jail, you wanted to do so; the archbishop himself wrote letter after letter about you, and when they let you out again you laughed in your sleeve at him. It is not my fault they did not hang you. I must tell you frankly now, it was I who wrote that anonymous letter to the public prosecutor; for that poor fellow, Balthasar, had told me long ago where the man was buried. I wrote the letter because I am convinced you murdered the man—yes, you may look daggers at me; I don't mind it. You did kill the man; that old vampire, Bridget, may have helped you, but you are the murderer. Now you know my opinion."

The mummy trembled with rage and anguish.

"And if I had killed him, what can they do to me? They have acquitted me. No man can be tried twice for the same crime."

"Well then, be quiet! If you have nothing to fear from men, you are not afraid of the devil, I think."

"Yes," replied the mummy; "yes, priest, I am afraid; not now, but in the night. I have such bad dreams at night. I see such horrid faces when I lie awake in my bed. And that is why I want to become a Catholic, priest. I will pay for it; I have made a new will; I have thought of you, priest; you'll have a thousand dollars; and Castle Rheinfeld is to be a Catholic Orphan Asylum for the whole province; the revenues from the estate to go to the asylum;

worth three hundred thousand dollars, priest—three hundred thousand dollars!”

“Nonsense,” said Ambrosius.

“By God! it is true, priest. The lawyer is sitting upstairs and writing it down. I have taken back the will that Snepper dictated to me. These rascals wanted to have everything; I had to promise it all to that witch, Camilla. Now I am going to found a Catholic Orphan Asylum, and the ready money they may divide among themselves—some two hundred thousand dollars—is not that fair, priest?”

Ambrosius had listened attentively, his head bent on one side. If things were really so, he had no right to refuse. He had always done what he could to obtain some provision for the orphans, and this was perhaps the one question that was nearest and dearest to his heart. If the relations had so large a sum for themselves—that was enough and more than enough for them all.

“Is that really so?”

“By God! by God!” stammered the old man.

“Send for the lawyer! I must see the will.”

The old gentleman pulled the bell-rope that hung near his chair from the ceiling. A few moments later Jean showed the lawyer in.

“Is everything ready?”

The lawyer bowed and took his seat at a small table near the fire.

“Read!” said the general, “and Jean can stay as witness.”

The lawyer read the will, which he had framed according to the direction of the old gentleman. It was all as the latter had stated.

“Is that right and valid in law now?” asked the old man.

“There is nothing wanting but your excellency’s signature and that of the two witnesses.”

“Stop!” said Ambrosius; “I want to take nothing. Distribute the thousand dollars among the other servants. I do not see why this gentleman in the white cravat is to have so much more than all the rest.”

Jean, the valet, grinned and said: “Yes indeed, your reverence.”

As Ambrosius insisted upon having his way, the lawyer had to make the necessary alteration. The document was duly signed. The lawyer rose, saying he must return to town on account of important business that was waiting for him. He promised to keep the will and to deposit it next day in court. Ambrosius, quite astonished at the turn which affairs had suddenly taken with the old general, was about to follow the lawyer, when the general recalled him.

"Priest, one word! Surely, priest, you are going to make me a Catholic now, and come every day to see me. You are the only man in whom I feel any confidence. You consider me a wicked old sinner, I know, but still you are a good man and will take care of me. They up there," and the old man pointed with the finger at the ceiling—"they would poison me if they could. And that is why I have disinherited them; that is all right and fair, is it not, priest?"

"We'll talk that over," replied Ambrosius. "You are an odd creature, in whom I cannot help feeling interested, although you are a wicked old sinner, as you say. I'll call in to-morrow morning. Good-by!"

"Good-by, priest! good-by! good-by!"

Jean, the valet, had accompanied the priest through the general's sitting-room and the garden-room, which was to-night brilliantly lighted up, and richly decorated with greenhouse plants; the doors were wide open, and surrounded with curious people from the country. The priest followed the well-known path through the park. Jean mingled with the assembled crowd; and while he seemed merely to amuse himself with the sight, he managed to get alongside of a man who had drawn his hat low down over his face, and a woman with a green veil hanging over an ill-shaped bonnet. He whispered a few words to them as he passed them. They went a little aside and disappeared behind the thick shrubbery near the terrace, close to the part of the château in which the general lived and where the grounds had been fenced off to keep them private. The valet followed them.

"How is it?" said the man in the slouched hat. "Is he alone now?"

"Yes. Nobody is going to come now. But he is not in bed yet."

"Pshaw! It is high time. The people are beginning to go away; they will notice us if we stay much longer."

"Look here, Kilian," said Jean, "suppose we leave it alone? The old man cannot live much longer, and we have it all the easier then!"

"Yes, you; but we!" said the woman, breaking her silence. "Kilian has to go, you know very well, and then you think you can do with me what you choose. But we'll teach you to play us tricks, you miserable hair-dresser you!"

And Bridget drew back her green veil and threatened the man with the white cravat, holding her bony hand right under his nose.

"Well, as you like it," said Jean, angrily; "it is true he has left me five hundred dollars in his will."

Bridget laughed. "Are you mad?" she asked. "Five hundred dollars! and the old man has a hundred thousand in his bureau. Are you going to do it or not? You'll never find the key as long as you live, if I don't show you where it is."

"You ought to listen to reason," said Jean; "I am ready! But you remember our agreement! You do it, and I alarm the house, or else they'll all suspect me at once!"

"Yes, yes!" growled Kilian.

"I have left the window-shutter open," said Jean; "he'll want me to close it when I put him to bed, then I'll open the window, as if I could not close the shutters. You must be ready then with the ladder."

"All right," said Kilian; "make haste now and go to your post!"

When Ambrosius had left the old general, he had remained sitting for some time, nodding, blinking, and laughing hoarsely; then he rose, limped to the door of his sitting-room, which he locked; then to a dark corner of his chamber, where he took a small key from an ordinary little box. With the key he limped back to an iron safe standing close by his bed, opened it, and took out a strong-box, which he placed on the little table before the fireplace. The effort had exhausted his strength; he sat there, bent double, gasping for breath. When he had recovered his breath, he pressed a spring in the strong-box and took out the papers

which lay inside, carefully piled one upon another. They were mortgages, government securities, notes, papers of every kind and value. His wrinkled discolored hands trembled, as he held them, one by one, close up to the light of the lamp, examining them through his spectacles. Whenever he had done with one, he threw the paper on the glowing coals and burning wood in the fireplace; and whenever the flame blazed up brightly, he laughed under his breath and murmured: "The ready money you may divide among yourselves. So it reads in my will; now you may look for it in the ashes! A thousand less, a thousand blows at your heart, you accursed brood—two thousand, you shall have nothing—three thousand, yes, dance away and fiddle away over my head; you won't dance much after this—four, five, six thousand, what a feast it would be for that brood!" Thus he went on, laughing and murmuring and coughing, till the box was empty. He leaned back in his chair, laughing and murmuring and coughing—stared into the glowing embers, on which a layer of light black ashes was rising and sinking at intervals, nodded again, nodded lower and lower and dreamed. Jean was coming to the false door in the alcove; he entered and crept cautiously on the soft carpet towards the window, which he opened very, very carefully; through the open window the cool night-air was blowing in, colder, colder; and between the glow in the fireplace and his face there rose slowly Kilian's face, staring at him with hungry eyes.

With a cry of anguish the old man started up from his lethargy. He had not dreamt of Kilian's face; it was there a few inches before him, and Kilian's hands were seizing his throat. He pulled at the bell-rope with the strength of despair.

"Cut the bell-rope, Jean!" cried Kilian, throwing himself upon the old man.

"Why did you not cut the bell-rope, stupid?"

"It was too late!"

"Cursed!"

"Make haste there!" said Bridget's voice from the window.

"The safe is opened; there is nothing in it," whispered Jean, trembling in all his limbs.

"You have robbed him first, blackguard."

"Make haste there!"

"Where must we look next?"

"There are people coming down the passage!" groaned Jean, who was listening at the false door.

Kilian also listened. There was no doubt; the fearful ringing of the bell must have been heard; they came to see what was the matter. The man uttered a fearful curse, rushed to the window and leapt out. Jean, finding himself alone with the dead man, and hearing the people quite near the door, could not find the key, which he had dropped in the first fight, and followed the murderer. They knocked, they called, they knocked again. One more resolute than the rest broke open the door; there lay his excellency in the arm-chair before the fireplace—strangled! The bony hand still held the bell-rope. The iron safe was open, the empty strong-box on the table, the open window with a ladder against it—murder! murder! they were screaming down the passages, up the broad staircase into the brilliantly-lighted rooms, in which the wedding guests were revelling and dancing and feasting, while trumpets sounded and haut-boys played, and all was merriment and joy.

Those who had wagered that Antonia Baroness Hohenstein would appear at the great feast at Castle Rheinfeld, in spite of all the rumors that connected her name with Munzer, and in spite of all police surveillance, had won their bet. Antonia had come about eight o'clock, sending back her carriage to town—an evidence that the baroness was determined to take up the gauntlet which society might possibly throw down at her feet. But even if a part of the company should have been against her, which was not very probable, the surpassing beauty of the fair sinner defied all evil intentions on the part of severe judges. Antonia had not been fifteen minutes in the ball-room when she found herself surrounded by admirers, as in her most brilliant days. And it seemed, indeed, almost impossible not to bow down before such transcendent beauty. Even Camilla's most enthusiastic admirers had to admit that the young lady could not rival the fair widow in point of figure or beauty of feature, neither in grace of movement nor in power of conversation—qualities

in all of which Antonia's mastery was universally admitted. Even his highness, who had so far been almost exclusively occupied with Camilla, begged that the Baroness Hohenstein might be presented to him. He had never seen her before, and now he turned to his first adjutant, saying, "Thorough-bred, 'pon honor, thorough-bred!" and the witty words made the round of the whole company in a few minutes. The fair lady seemed, however, to make a special effort to-night to celebrate a complete triumph. She was all ablaze with diamonds and amiability—and this amiability harmonized so strangely with the pale face and the black flaming eyes! "If I had to paint a Sphinx or a Medusa, you should be my model!" whispered Kettenberg, as he bent over the back of her chair.

"Ah! Here you are!" exclaimed Antonia. "I wanted to make you my compliment on your arrangements. All the world is full of your praise."

She rose and stepped into a bay-window, apparently engaged in a general conversation with the painter.

"To-day!"

"When?"

"At ten!"

"All is ready?"

"Yes, and here!"

"Excellent! I tell you I am playing my part charmingly! More madly than ever, I tell you. You need not fear, baroness, that they will suspect us. These good people here have too much to do with themselves. I tell you, there are things going on here——"

"Hush! We are observed. You had better leave me!"

The painter made a few bold gestures with his right hand, laughed aloud, bowed and went away.

Colonel Hohenstein happened to pass by near the place where Antonia was standing, and said, as he came close up to her: "War or peace?"

Antonia made no reply; her eyes flashed lightnings of deadly hatred; she put her hand on her heart and then let it drop slowly.

"Pshaw!" said the colonel; "you ought to be reasonable and make peace; he is gone now, or pretty safely concealed; what more do you want?"

Antonia did not reply nor stir. The colonel shrugged his shoulders and went on. He would have given much if Antonia had shown a trace of forgiveness. What was she meditating? The colonel was a brave man, but there was something unnatural in Antonia's manner. He had made repeated attempts to approach her; she had invariably repelled him as to-day. He had resolved to forget the beautiful woman and the wrong he had done her; but he could not. She drew his thoughts to her as if by magic power; he did not know whether he loved Antonia, or whether he hated her; now he could have killed her in cold blood, and then he would have thrown himself at her feet, kissing the dust on her path. He had not known a quiet moment since the day of Munzer's trial; he felt as if that evil hour had poisoned his blood. As soon as he closed his eyes, he saw her beautiful face disfigured by wrath, shame, hatred, and thirst of revenge. The cold, insolent libertine, who had never had the slightest pity for his victims, fell under the ban of superstitious fear, which he tried in vain to master by reasoning, or to drown in dissipation.

Antonia had remained a few moments in the window, looking after the colonel with the glance of a basilisk. "He or I," she murmured, "or both of us."

The hour of revenge had come; it was to be accomplished as soon as Munzer was free and once more in the arms of his wife. She had sworn so to herself with a thousand oaths. She hardly thought of herself, whether she would perish in the attempt; and if she thought of it, it was with perfect indifference. What was life to her? To live under the burden of a fearful memory which could not be borne without changing her into a fury! "He or I, or both of us!" That was the one air she was ever repeating to herself by day and by night; and as she hummed it, she grasped the sharp dagger which she had worn in her bosom since that day. She knew the colonel would die, even if her own plan of revenge should miscarry. Cajus had told her, with his dark smile, that he had an old account to settle with the colonel; and her only fear now was, that Cajus might anticipate her, and cheat her out of the delight of avenging herself. She was almost angry with herself, that she had not been able to pretend to be reconciled to her

enemy. That ought to have been the first step towards her end ! She had not thought the first step would be so hard ; but whenever she saw the man, she felt as if insanity was coming upon her. She pressed her hands on her burning temples ; and then making a great effort, she went to meet Todwitz, who was looking in despair for his partner. She had promised him a cotillon, and now the music had begun ; the couples were all standing ready ; he had been so happy and proud in his good-fortune ; and his delight at having found Antonia at last was unbounded.

This cotillon, which was to be the last before supper, united all the beauties of the evening. Camilla, led by her husband, seemed to be amply consoled for such a misfortune by the circumstance that the prince was her *vis-à-vis*. She floated up to the prince with a most gracious smile, and evidently had no ear for her husband's words. The privy councillor was beside himself. The contempt with which his young wife treated him was so evident, that he felt grateful if people did not laugh outright in his face. His heart overflowed with jealousy and malice ; he hated this young creature, whose beauty he had thought the goal of all his earthly wishes, and who now made him ridiculous before the whole world.

"We must leave after this dance, Camilla," he whispered.

"What?"

"We leave after this dance, at once."

"Nonsense! The prince told me he would sit by me at supper."

"*Cavaliers seuls!*"

The prince came forward, gracefully balancing himself, with an affectedly careless step, and looking steadily at Camilla with love-sick eyes. Snepper bit his lip with rage. "By my soul's salvation!" he murmured, "we shall leave after this dance if I have to drag you by your hair to the carriage!"

Camilla turned pale ; her quick wit told her that Snepper's patience had reached the line, that he would carry his point to-day, and that their married life must henceforth be a battle royal.

"You shall repent this!" she whispered.

"We'll see who holds out longest!" replied Snepper, showing his teeth like a malicious ape.

During the same time Willamowski was dancing an evil dance. Miss Hinkel was his partner. Georgianna had had a slight affair with Kettenberg before she became engaged to Brinkman ; how much there was really in it, the world never knew ; it suspected all the more. She knew perfectly well that Kettenberg worshipped at many altars, as she herself was a well-known coquette, and this extraordinary couple had the strange habit of exchanging confidences as to their respective flirtations. Thus Georgianna was perfectly aware of Aurelia's attachment to Kettenberg, especially as Aurelia herself possessed the virtue of discretion in a most modest degree. Georgianna was by no means pleased to hear of Aurelia's good luck in winning the rich baron ; she knew that but for Aurelia she herself might have been Baroness Willamowski at any time, and on that account she conceived for her rival a hatred which was all the more intense as it was carefully concealed under the mask of warm friendship. But to hate and to do the greatest possible injury to the hated person, was one and the same thing to Georgianna ; thus she had spent all her time in poisoning Willamowski's good-natured heart drop by drop with the bitterest jealousy. She had had ample opportunity for it to-night. Kettenberg had been more imprudent than usual in his desire to appear perfectly free from all pre-occupation, and Aurelia also had set aside every consideration under the influence of the scene in the morning.

"Just look how she continually follows him with her eyes," said Georgianna. "You'll have to call him out, Willamowski ; you surely ought to do so !"

"Oh, heavens ! and I love her so dearly !" sighed the poor baron, from the bottom of his heart.

"All the more it is your duty," whispered Georgianna.

"And that on my wedding-day !"

The young lady smiled ironically. "Kettenberg has been here three days. That was rather imprudent in you, dear Willamowski. You ought to have foreseen——"

The poor, tortured man groaned aloud. "Pardon me," he said ; "but I must withdraw ; everything swims before my eyes."

He tottered from his place amid the dancers towards a divan, and this created some excitement in that part of the

ball-room. "He is fainting—the great heat—where is the bride?"

Aurelia came hastening up; the baron broke out in tears, as she bent over him.

"Are you mad, Stillfried?" she whispered, very much frightened. "For heaven's sake! Anything, only not a scene!"

Many of the guests had been crowding around the two, partly from curiosity, and partly enjoying the evident trouble with much satisfaction, when suddenly a new sight presented itself to their astonished eyes.

From one of the adjoining rooms, where a number of younger officers had been emptying bottle after bottle ever since the beginning of the ball, Cuno came forth, almost dead drunk, with open uniform, stammering and staring, while his brother Odo, only less drunk than Cuno, followed him, trying to keep him back.

"Let me, in three devils' name," cried Cuno. "I want to kiss my pretty cousin. I will, and if that wretched puppy Sneider, or—or—the pri—prince——"

Several officers who were standing around hurried up to the drunken man to try and remove him; but Cuno tore himself away, and staggered forward, right into the midst of the group in which Camilla stood, pale and gloomy, by her husband's side, not daring to raise her eyes to the prince.

The prince saw the drunken officer fall, and quickly left the dance. Everything was broken up; some rushed away, others came crowding up; and suddenly, near the main entrance to the ball-room, the cry was raised: Murder! murder!—Who?—What?—I don't know!—The old general?—Impossible—horrible! Thus they cried and whispered, and ran all in an instant, so that the great crowd rolled in a compact mass towards the door. Women fainted—the confusion had reached the highest point—the trumpets sounded and the hautboys played, and then of a sudden the music stopped, and breathless silence added to the horror.

In the meantime Antonia's impatience had driven her out of the hot room into the cooler passages. The hour had come when Cajus and Ruchel, in their carriage, were to take the fugitive from the Witches' Tower, and the minutes seemed to her eternities. Just then the cry of murder comes yelling

up the staircase. A sad presentiment tells her that this incident may become fatal to Munzer's flight. Her anticipations are but too true. She has no sooner run down, following the crying women and the excited men in their rush to the lower apartments, and reached the door of the murdered man's room, when she hears the words: I saw them run—down to the village—let us hunt them down!

Her resolution is formed in an instant—if the inspiration of the moment which acts with the force of instinct, can be called a resolution. She hurries down the long passage to the garden-room, and from the garden-room, through the anxious, curious crowd of country people, into the park. She knows the locality perfectly, from her former visits here; she knows that at the foot of the park a gate in the enclosure leads to a footpath, by which she can in a few minutes reach the place where the carriage is to wait. Anxiety gives wings to her steps; but she is so pre-occupied with the one thought, that she does not hear how some one follows her, closely but cautiously, keeping near the hedges or behind the trees, but always at the same near distance from her, impelled as he is by the demon of jealousy, and a blind, magic force, which binds him to the heels of the beautiful woman. She reaches the gate; she hurries down the narrow tow-path, under the chestnut-trees alongside the canal, in which the water makes a low, gurgling noise. She runs faster and faster, for she can see the carriage now. Suddenly, as she has almost reached the last of the trees, a form starts forth as if it were a part of the deep shade itself, in which all is wrapt here. It is Munzer himself, who has seen her white dress shining from afar, and has hurried to meet her, while the others are busy about the carriage, which has been slightly injured by the bad road. She throws herself on his bosom, trembling with excitement; she wants to cry, Flee! but her voice will not come at her bidding; she can do nothing but thrust him from her. He bids her farewell in words which she scarcely hears; he swears he will obey her wishes, but that no power on earth or in heaven can prevent him from loving her. She thrusts him from her with increasing anguish, and at last she can draw a deep breath, and stammer: "Flee, Bernhard, flee!"

At this moment the man who has followed her from the

château leapt forward from behind the trees, and ran Munzer through with his sword. Munzer fell without uttering a sound. Antonia recognized the colonel. With the swiftness of thought she drew the dagger which she had concealed in her bosom, and aimed it at the heart of her enemy, who staggered back wounded, but not killed. He uttered a fierce curse and turned towards her, raising the hilt of his sword—the blade had snapped off in the body of his victim—to strike her.

But before the arm of the madman came down, two hands seized him with irresistible power, tore him with one terrible jerk down to the ground and dragged him swiftly to the canal.

Antonia had thrown herself upon Munzer's body ; she saw and heard nothing of the horror that took place almost immediately near her ; she saw nothing but the face of the man she had loved as she had loved no other, which is now covered with deadly pallor ; she heard nothing but his low breathing, which gradually ceased to be audible.

Wolfgang, who had come up close behind Cajus, tried to raise Munzer ; a torrent of blood poured forth from his mouth ; his head sank feebly on one side ; but he raised himself with a last effort, and stammered : “ To her ; carry me to her ! ”

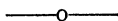
Cajus came back and told Wolfgang to raise the upper part of Munzer's body. Cajus's voice sounded a trifle rougher and hoarser than before, but he showed no other change ; nor could it be seen whether it is water or blood which he wipes from his hand with his handkerchief. They lifted the dying man into the carriage ; Antonia and Wolfgang took their seats by him ; Cajus jumped on the box by Ruchel, seized the reins, and whipped the horses. The carriage rolled down the rocky slope, then across the fields at full gallop, in a circuit around the village, and at last upon the turnpike near the river, at full speed to Rheineck, past Rheineck to Churchtown, there to the parsonage, the gate of which was open, and closed immediately behind them, Ambrosius himself standing watch to receive them.

Clara rushed up to the carriage, but Wolfgang anticipated her ; he told her what could not be concealed. Clara uttered a dull, low cry, and staggered back. Then she recov-

ered herself, and seized the hand of her husband, whom the men lifted out of the carriage to carry him into the house and to lay him in the priest's study, upon his lounge. She sank on her knees beside him, and looked with tearless eyes at the pale face. He raised once more the weary eyelids and tried to smile, but his smile froze on his features; Clara saw it; a heart-rending cry burst from her suffering bosom; she sank almost fainting on the breast of the departed. Antonia stood immovable at the head of the lounge, her face horribly disfigured with grief. When Wolfgang turned to her with pity in his eyes, she looked at him with vacant, fixed eyes, and murmured, "I meant to do my best."

Cajus, who had gone out, came back now and touched Wolfgang and Ruchel on the shoulder.

"I heard the signal; the steamer will be here in ten minutes. It takes us ten minutes to reach the landing-place. Make haste, you can be of no use here!"



CONCLUSION.

IT was the second summer after these events, on a hot July evening, when three men were examining the progress made during the preceding week in an enormous edifice which was to crown the top of a hill at one of the most beautiful points in Switzerland. The oldest of the men—perhaps fifty years old, but hearty-looking, and with a fine, intelligent face—had drawn his arm familiarly through that of his younger companion, and listened with many a yes and ah to the explanations which the latter gave him about the condition of the building; while the third, a tall, black-eyed, curly-headed man, who had papers and drawings under his arm, and looked as if he might be the superintendent, walked alongside, accepting the commendations he received from the older gentleman as something that was due to him.

"Very good, very good!" said the old gentleman; "you are famous fellows, I am sure. We shall be under roof

before winter at that rate. That surpasses all my expectations—very good, very good !”

“If you have no objection, gentlemen,” said the man with the drawings, “I should like to go back to the office. I have not settled all the accounts with the masons yet.”

“Very good !” said the older man, while his companion nodded kindly with his head.

The man with the drawings touched his cap with a soldier’s salute, turned on his heels, and jumped lightly and safely down the rather high terraces which had been cut in this side of the hill.

“An excellent man, this Ruchel !” said the old gentleman ; “like him very much ; active, intelligent, trustworthy—capital fellow ! Of course you need no such men at home, eh ?”

“That sounds almost like a personal reproach,” said the other, smiling.

“Personal ? Not for you, dear Wolfgang, certainly not ! They seem to have no need for you either, at home, fortunately for me. What should I do without you ?”

“You did pretty well without me before !”

“I had to. Because I found nobody who could enter upon my ideas and help me. Certainly, it was time I found you ; the thing was growing up too large for me. As long as we are young, we all fancy we can do very well alone ; but as we grow older, we find out that our strength is after all very small, and that we can only hope to succeed in great enterprises by co-operating with others. Thus I have been infinitely benefited by my connection with your uncle. He has a genius for political economy ; his system of savings banks and co-operative stores, as he explained it to me to-day at dinner, is admirable. Upon the broad shoulders of that man, I believe there rests a part of the future of Germany—of Europe—of the whole world. I count it as one of the luckiest incidents of my life that I have been able to assist such a man with the one thing he needed—capital. And you see how our factories have improved since he has become our agent for Germany. We shall have a nice balance at the end of the year.”

Mr. Degenfeld joyfully rubbed his hands and looked up at the high scaffolding, on which the men were still busily at work.

"How that grows!" he said. "And how I long to see it next year! They will come from all parts of the world. That Kurshaus is to become a famous house all over the world. Where on earth is there another such place, which unites everything that can re-invigorate a ruined constitution: the mildest climate, the purest air, and a view such as would make the worst hypochondriac believe that the world is a beautiful world after all. A man who cannot be cured here, cannot be cured anywhere; don't you think so, Wolfgang?"

The young man had not heard the last words of his paternal friend. A small group of two ladies and two gentlemen, who were coming up a newly-finished path, had attracted and monopolized his attention.

"There they are coming!" he said, involuntarily advancing a few steps in that direction, and then turning quickly again to Mr. Degenfeld, as if he were ashamed of his impatience.

"Ah!" said the latter, smiling, "still the lover, although the baby is crying at home in its cradle! Very good! But are our guests really going to leave us to-morrow? Why don't you persuade them to stay, Wolfgang?"

"I have used all my powers of persuasion, but you know how inflexible my uncle is in what he considers his duty."

In the meantime the four persons had come up; first Peter Schmitz leading Ottilia, and behind them Doctor Holm, who had assisted Aunt Bella. Ottilia withdrew her arm, and came hastily up to her husband: "Hedda is fast asleep," she whispered, winding her arms around his neck, "and she has such red little cheeks! she looks like a little angel!"

Peter Schmitz had joined Mr. Degenfeld. Doctor Holm, wiping the perspiration from his bald forehead, looked inquiringly up at the lofty edifice, the colossal proportions of which appeared to great advantage on this side, and said, turning to Aunt Bella: "*Very-orum good-orum!*" Aunt Bella made no reply. Her tearful eyes hung on Wolfgang and Ottilia, who were walking arm in arm towards the forest, whispering eagerly to each other.

"I shall never see them again!" said Aunt Bella.

Doctor Holm shook his head.

"Stay here, Aunt Bella," he said, "you cannot endure it with us ; your longing after the little creature which you have been dandling for two months every day by the hour upon your knees, and which has to-day become your god-child besides, will leave you no rest. Stay here !"

"Never !" said Aunt Bella, very peremptorily. "Ottilia no longer has any need of me, and glad as she would be if I stayed, a third person is always the fifth wheel on a wagon to a young married couple. And if I remained here without having anything to do, and had to think of you and Peter sitting there alone at the big table in the old room at home, with nobody to help you to your dinner ; and especially Peter, who never knows what he is eating, if everything is not cut nice and appetizing for him, and the soup was too much salted, a thing you cannot bear, Holm—and then at night when you come home from your work—no, Holm, no—never !" and the good soul broke out in tears.

"Courage then, Aunt Bella !" said Holm. "No one can serve two masters. And besides, you are perfectly right ; your place is with us. Schmitz would miss you grievously—to say nothing of myself. He asked me only to-day whether you had decided yet, and when I said you would in all probability come home with us, he smiled, drew his hand through his hair, and said : She is a good girl !"

"Did he really say so ?" asked Aunt Bella, and her eyes began to rain once more.

"Holla ! where are you leading us to ?" inquired Mr. Degenfeld.

"I think to the meadow ; it is too late for a longer walk !" Wolfgang called back again.

They now proceeded on the road which Wolfgang had laid out in spiral lines around the whole hill. The hill was thickly overgrown with the greatest variety of deciduous trees and evergreens, and the whole park-like arrangement was intended for the benefit of the guests at the establishment. The work was only begun ; the rocky sides, which had been cut down to make the road, were not yet overgrown with ferns and creepers, as the plan required ; provisional benches took the place of future marble seats, and little temples where the mineral waters were to be drunk ; but the whole plan boldly and ingeniously conceived could already be well

discerned, and was judiciously appreciated by Uncle Peter and Doctor Holm. They never tired looking at the magnificent views obtained through skillfully managed vistas ; and thus the sun had already set in the west, when they at last left the forest and came out on the mountain meadow. Wolfgang went to a little wooden cottage for some blankets, on which the company stretched themselves, with the exception of Mr. Degenfeld, who preferred walking up and down, rubbing his hand with delight at the pleasure which his friends seemed to derive from the glorious view. Mr. Degenfeld owned more houses, factories, and estates than he could always promptly recall to his mind, but this little meadow of a few acres was his special pride. And justly so. A finer view could hardly be found anywhere. At their feet the lovely valleys, strewn with villages and houses, from the midst of which lofty masses of rock grew up and were now blazing in the rich evening light ; behind them were the gentle, thickly-wooded hills, upon which the mountains farther back looked down ; and then, on the right, where the rocks opened as if on purpose, so far back that the thunder of the avalanches could no longer be heard, and yet so near that every crevice in the glaciers could be seen distinctly, and the giant Alps themselves, growing with their ice-covered heads wonderfully up into the blue sky as if into eternity itself.

The mild, solemn beauty of the hour and the place harmonized fully with the feelings that were stirring in the hearts of the good people who were sitting here once more together, before parting. On the following day, early, they were to bid each other farewell, for a long time to come. Their memory recalled all the good and the evil that time had brought them in the course of years, but the evil had lost its bitterness and was united to the good, as night is bound to day. Mr. Degenfeld told them of his brother, the major, how he had as a boy always aspired to the highest aim, never for a moment belying the infinite goodness of his heart and the nobility of his nature. Munzer's name also was mentioned, his great ability and his tragic fate ; Antonia, to whom, now that her body had been resting for more than a year in the silent grave, even Aunt Bella was willing to do justice ; Clara, to whom Antonia had left her whole fortune,

when life's overwhelming burden was taken from her, and whose only real wealth was after all her little Ella, who developed almost daily greater loveliness, and often caused her quiet, sorrowful mother to smile involuntarily when she recalled in her innocent prattle her father's fantastic, high-toned notions. They thought of wild Cajus and of his last dread deed, which was universally ascribed to the murderers of the old general; and as they had escaped, and the fanatic had long since buried himself, as far as all who had known him here were concerned, in the Far West of America, the enigma was likely to remain unsolved forever. They thought of poor Balthasar and his philanthropy, by which he had proposed to set the disjointed world right again, and of the great and perfectly true principles which formed the basis of his dreams; they thought of that whole, strange period, when a nation was roused to the very lowest depths, and the violent upheavings had brought to the surface so much mire and so many priceless pearls.

"Those were great times," said Peter Schmitz, "and none but fools or evil-disposed men will deny it. Whatever moves a nation or all mankind to its innermost soul, cannot be small and contemptible, or we would have to despise mankind as a whole. The man whose look does not reach beyond the limited horizon of his personal interest and desires, and such people as expect to see ideas which require centuries for their perfection, completed in a few months or years, such men of course can see nothing in the events of those years but folly and malice, and will, to remain consistent, scoff at us and our silent activity. But we will not be deterred by them. We know that the idea of a free, fraternal humanity is immortal, although we, as individuals, pass away as the smoke passeth away; we know that time, which breaks these masses of rocks to dust, will also break down the barriers which ignorance and superstition have raised to keep the different classes of society apart from each other; we know that the night of tyranny serves to give rest and renewed vigor to youthful liberty, so that at sunrise she may be able to shake her golden locks and joyfully go to her work. For this conviction I have lived, ever since as a youth my mind was first inflamed with this idea of the solidarity of interests of all men; for this conviction I

am living now, a gray-haired old man ; in this conviction I shall die when my hour comes."

There was a peculiar tone in the voice of Peter Schmitz as he spoke these words, a tone which mysteriously made all their hearts tremble with awe. Thus they sat in silence, united by a common, instinctive feeling. In the grass insects were chirping ; fireflies were flying in large circles around the low bushes, and night rose darker and darker from the valleys up the slopes of the mountains ; but high above them the purple reflex of the sun was still burning on the lonely glaciers of the Jungfrau—a symbol for the silent people below, of the undying light which may set for the individual, but can never set for mankind.

THE END.